

# The Feminist Movement and Equality in the Federal Workforce: Understanding the Position of Women in USAID's Foreign Service

A Monograph

by

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## **Abstract**

The Feminist Movement and Equality in the Federal Workforce: Understanding the Position of Women in USAID's Foreign Service, by Heather C. Smith-Taylor, 75 pages.

The US Agency for International Development is one of many US Government foreign policy agencies that hires and manages employees to fulfill its professional needs abroad through the Foreign Service personnel system. That system, devised nearly a century ago, requires an update in order to take into account the needs of today's professional women. Without such an update, it is likely that women will leave USAID's Foreign Service in favor of careers that allow them to achieve both professional and personal fulfillment. Such a shift would deprive both the Agency and the nation of some of the greatest talent available in the field of international development.

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### **Acronyms**

AAFSW	Association of American Foreign Service Women
AEF	Annual Evaluation Form
AWS	Alternate Work Schedule
CPC	Critical Priority Country
DOS	Department of State
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EFM	Eligible Family Member
FMLA	Family Medical Leave Act
FS	Foreign Service
FSO	Foreign Service Officer
SFS	Senior Foreign Service
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
WAO	Women's Action Organization

## Introduction

The entrance of women into the American workplace has been controversial since women first organized to advocate for their right to have a career in the early 1900's. By 2015, the vast majority of the American public has accepted women's right to pursue professional, as well as personal, fulfillment.<sup>1</sup> However, numerous battles remain before American society reaches true equality between the sexes. The mere pervasiveness of the question of whether or not women can "have it all" and discussion of "women's" needs for work-life balance demonstrates that Americans have not fully come to terms with women's new role as both professionals and family members.<sup>2</sup> Further, some careers pose obstacles for women that male employees do not confront or that they confront in a different way. The Foreign Service (FS), through which the Department of State (DOS), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and a handful of other US Government (USG) agencies hire diplomats to serve in American Embassies throughout the world, is one of those professions.

The nature of the Foreign Service system permeate the lives of employees in a way that most other careers do not. The Foreign Service requires that Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) and their families spend significant portions of their lives and careers living abroad, often at the expense of a spouse's career or a child's education.<sup>3</sup> Many times, the country to which an Officer

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<sup>1</sup> "A Woman's Nation Changes Everything," The Shriver Report and Center for American Progress, October 2009, accessed March 30, 2015, <http://shrivereport.org/special-report/a-womans-nation-changes-everything/>.

<sup>2</sup> Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014); Anne Marie Slaughter, "Why Women Still Can't Have It All," *The Atlantic*, June 13, 2012, accessed November 14, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/07/why-women-still-cant-have-it-all/309020/>

<sup>3</sup> Eilene Zimmerman, "Hiring Window Is Open at the Foreign Service," *The New York Times*, December 20, 2008, accessed April 3, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/21/jobs/21officers.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/21/jobs/21officers.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

is assigned is not entirely of their choosing—FSOs are expected to go where the service needs them and agree to “worldwide availability” to codify the government’s ability to make those decisions.<sup>4</sup> Officers must be willing to travel, unaccompanied, to war zones for at least one year, frequently leaving families behind.<sup>5</sup> Officers who enter the Foreign Service unmarried all too often remain single, even if they had hoped for a family, and Officers who choose to start a family while abroad face a plethora of constraints and obstacles, starting with their pregnancy and often lasting through that child’s high school graduation. In the current American culture of late marriages, dual-career families, and hyper-involved parenting, the current Foreign Service system often requires employees to choose between their profession and their personal lives, instead of allowing for fulfillment in both.

The US legislature wrote the precepts of the United States Foreign Service system at a time when far fewer women participated in the formal workforce. American society has revolutionized its career expectations for both men and women dozens of times since the original Foreign Service Act was written in 1924 and even further since the latest update to that Act was approved in 1980. The *Foreign Service Act of 1980* requires that the service be representative of the American populace, that the gender and racial representation within the FS is emblematic of the American people. The fundamental mandates of that system, however, did not adapt to enable this sort of representative corps, and the system has not borne a critical review in over the past three decades of significant social change. The resulting personnel system affects female employees in a way that is more acutely and severely felt than by its male employees and is not

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<sup>4</sup> US Agency for International Development, “Foreign Service Officer FAQ,” last updated October 16, 2014, accessed March 30, 2015, <http://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/careers/foreign-service/foreign-service-officer-faq>.

<sup>5</sup> Susan Cornwell, “Danger and Separation from Families Changing Job of U.S. Diplomats,” *Reuters*, May 19, 2013, accessed April 2, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/19/us-usa-diplomats-idUSBRE94I01G20130519>.



compatible with contemporary professional women's needs and expectations. Younger employees, especially women, are increasingly less willing to accept those strict requirements. Agencies such as the DOS and USAID who rely on Foreign Service personnel to shoulder the preponderance of their work have begun to see a backlash against this system. Female Officers are expressing significant dissatisfaction with the system as it currently stands.

The hiring of a new Foreign Service Officer represents a significant investment of time and resources on behalf of the American taxpayers. In addition to salary and transfer expenses, the Agency invests in nearly a year of Washington, DC-based training and six- to twelve months of stateside language training prior to sending a new Officer and his or her entire family to their first training tour abroad. Relying on an outdated system that was never designed to recruit, retain, or promote women in numbers equal to men will cost those taxpayers significant money as women forgo their Foreign Service careers in favor of less restrictive opportunities in the civil service or the private sector. While USAID's Foreign Service attrition rate is low, resignations have been steadily increasing since 2008.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, the Agency has not collected information regarding the gender breakdown of the employees who are choosing to leave the service.<sup>7</sup>

It is also possible that America's foreign policy is suffering due to insufficient female representation. While liberal feminism holds that women and men do not behave differently once they reach positions of power, difference feminism purports that women and men approach problems and opportunities in fundamentally distinct ways.<sup>8</sup> A recent University of Chicago

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<sup>6</sup> Cary Tennis, "I've Got the Foreign Service Blues," *Salon*, July 19, 2011, accessed December 4, 2015, [http://www.salon.com/2011/07/20/foreign\\_service/](http://www.salon.com/2011/07/20/foreign_service/).

<sup>7</sup> US Agency for International Development, "FS Attrition 2008-2013," Human Capital and Talent Management Unit, received March 10, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Rachel Fudge, "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Feminism But Were Afraid to Ask," *Bitch Magazine*, 2006, accessed February 20, 2015,

study found that women were “more effective and persuasive politicians than their male counterparts”—precisely the traits that are needed in America’s diplomatic community.<sup>9</sup> Further, some foreign policy professionals have noted, “our increasingly networked, horizontal world may privilege the brains and societal training that women — who are prepared to be relationship-builders and nurturers — receive.”<sup>10</sup> In order to maintain, and even improve, the representation of women in the Foreign Service, USAID and the United States Government (USG) need to review and update the FS personnel system, making it more compatible with women’s evolving professional demands.

## Methodology

A review of feminist theory will serve as the basis for an evaluation of the ability of the current Foreign Service system to meet the needs of female employees. Based on the progression of feminist writing regarding women and careers, from the 18th century to the present day, this review will show how feminist theory and society evolved and where they differ. This evolution in thought will be juxtaposed with a review of the history of the US Foreign Service system, from its inception, to its initial legislation in 1924, and through the present day. Finally, an analysis of the current Foreign Service regulations’ treatment of women and issues affecting women’s professional and personal lives will determine if that system is having a detrimental effect on the women within its ranks.

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<http://bitchmagazine.org/article/everything-about-feminism-you-wanted-to-know-but-were-afraid-to-ask>.

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Berry and Sarah Anzia, “The Jackie (and Jill) Robinson Effect: Why do Congresswomen Outperform Congressmen?” *American Journal of Political Science* 55, no. 3 (July 2011), accessed April 13, 2015, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2011.00512.x/abstract>.

<sup>10</sup> Heather Hurlbert, “The Feminine Realpolitik: Breaking down the walls of Micah Zenko’s ‘City of Men,’” *Foreign Policy*, July 18, 2011, accessed September 1, 2014, [http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/07/18/the-feminine-realpolitik/?wp\\_login\\_redirect=0](http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/07/18/the-feminine-realpolitik/?wp_login_redirect=0).

A review of literature, articles, blogs, and other publications produced by female and male FSOs and other women impacted by the FS system will facilitate an assessment of staff morale and an understanding of how the Foreign Service might be adapted to more fully meet their needs. USAID's Annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, conducted each year over the past decade, will be scrutinized to determine trends in professional satisfaction over the past several years, as well as to identify any issues raised by or disproportionately affecting women.

## Review of Feminist Theory

In its most simplistic and frequently cited terms, feminism is about achieving equality between men and women. Dig a little deeper into the field of Western feminist theory and it becomes clear that the true intention of feminist theory is to expand options available to both sexes while eliminating gender stratification within society. Feminist theorists contend that both men and women should be able to develop themselves as individuals and to express their interests in any way they choose. Laws and cultural norms that limit any person's ability to pursue their own interests, such as regulations that limit women's income, educational or job opportunities, should be disputed and, ultimately, corrected.

While countless sub-specialties exist within the field of feminist theory, in a broad sense, the feminists recognize their movement as divided into four phases or "waves." The first wave of feminism is generally accepted to have occurred from the late nineteenth to the early-twentieth centuries, the second wave beginning in the 1960s, the third wave commencing in the 1990s, and the fourth and current wave launching in 2008.<sup>11</sup> Prior to the development of the first wave however, pioneers of the movement were producing the first feminist philosophy, providing critical groundwork for further phases of activism and thought. It is widely recognized that Christine de Pizan's attack on sexist clerics in the 15<sup>th</sup> century is "the first time a woman takes up her pen to defend her sex."<sup>12</sup> She was, however, by no means the last.

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<sup>11</sup> Jennifer Baumgardner, *F'em: Goo, Gaga and Some Thoughts on Balls* (Berkley: Seal Press, 2011), 12-13.

<sup>12</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Random House, 2009), 117; Estelle B. Freedman, ed., *The Essential Feminist Reader* (New York: Modern Library, 2007), 1; Ellen Keim, "Christine de Pizan: Early Feminist Writer and Historian," *Femagination: The Feminine Imagination Blog*, March 14, 2010, accessed March 30, 2015, <http://www.femagination.com/2555/christine-de-pizan-early-feminist-writer-and-historian/>; Jean Lloyd, "Christine de Pizan," King's College, History Department, Women's History Site, last modified July 7 2006, accessed March 30, 2015, [http://departments.kings.edu/womens\\_history/chrisdp.html](http://departments.kings.edu/womens_history/chrisdp.html); Vanora Bennett, "Christine de Pizan:

Abigail Adams, commonly credited with being one of the first American feminists, encouraged her husband John Adams throughout his political career to ensure their new country did not ignore the rights of its women. In a famous letter to the Continental Congress in 1776, Mrs. Adams admonished her political leaders to “[r]emember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could [sic].”<sup>13</sup> She went on to warn, “[i]f particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice or Representation [sic].”<sup>14</sup> While her husband’s reply was dismissive, Abigail Adams’ cautioning proved prescient and provided critical roots to the first-wave feminist movement that began to grow in the late 1800s in America.

Published soon after Ms. Adams’ letters in 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* became the first written work to question the idea of gender essentialism—the belief that fundamental physical and intellectual differences separate the sexes. Throughout human history, society has used gender essentialism to justify the dominance of men and the exclusion of women from positions of social, political, and intellectual power. It glorifies women’s obedient, accommodating nature, and even “maternal instinct” while purporting strength, rationality, and courage to be traits exclusive to men.<sup>15</sup> While her time did not allow her

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Europe’s First Feminist,” vanorabennett.com, accessed March 30, 2015, <http://vanorabennett.com/book/blood-royal-aka-the-queens-lover-christine-de-pizan-europes-first-feminist/>.

<sup>13</sup> Kathryn Cullen-DuPont, *The Encyclopedia of Women’s History in America*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Facts On File, 2000), 3.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Jane Wong, “The Anti-Essentialism vs. Essentialism Debate in Feminist Legal Theory: The Debate and Beyond,” *William and Mary Journal of Women and the Law* 5, no. 2 (1999): 275.

to eschew the idea of essentialism completely, Wollstonecraft did note that the most drastic differences between men and women, including those leading to the subjugation of women, were largely socially constructed phenomena and not attributes inherent to the sexes. She argued that while women may be inferior to men in many ways, they ought to aspire to the same virtues as men. She pled with women to “strengthen the female mind by enlarging it, and there will be an end to blind obedience,”<sup>16</sup> noting that through improved educational opportunities for women and equal treatment of men and women, the discrepancy between the sexes would be diminished. The theories and ideas promulgated by these early feminists directly influenced the first wave of the Western feminist movement.

#### First-Wave Feminism: Votes and Jobs

The fight for women’s suffrage in North America and Europe, occurring in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, characterized the “first wave” of the feminist movement. Underpinning that focus, however, was a clear call for increased opportunities for women as well as a reduction in restrictions placed on women by society. First-wave feminists advocated for equality in basic rights, including increased political representation, improved working conditions, and the right to vote and to an education. The Suffragettes used tactics considered “unladylike” such as hunger strikes, chaining themselves to public structures, and the destruction of public property to provoke arrest, thereby bringing attention and a sense of urgency to their cause.<sup>17</sup> British Suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst justified those actions by noting that “[w]e are here, not because we are law-breakers; we are here in our efforts to become law-makers.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (New York: Dover Publications, 1996), 173.

<sup>17</sup> Charlotte Krolokke and Anne Scott Sorensen, *Gender Communication Theories and Analyses* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006), 3.

<sup>18</sup> Emmeline Pankhurst, *My Own Story* (London: Hearsts’s International Library, 1914), 129, accessed February 1, 2015, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/34856/34856-h/34856-h.htm>.

American feminists and activists such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton provided a foundation for the women's suffrage movement, ultimately supplying Congress with the language for the 19th Amendment. Stanton's Declaration of Sentiments, signed at the first women's rights convention in 1848 in New York, reworded the United States' most sacrosanct of documents, offering that "[w]e hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal." Stanton went on to assert that "[n]ow, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious degradation—in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of these United States."<sup>19</sup>

It is clear that the goals of Stanton and Anthony, like those of other feminist theorists at the time, transcended women's suffrage. They were making a case for the emancipation of women from the societal constraints placed upon their sex. Anthony expressed this directly when she stated, "I think the girl who is able to earn her own living and pay her own way should be as happy as anybody on earth. The sense of independence and security is very sweet."<sup>20</sup> British author Virginia Woolf's 1929 essay, *A Room of One's Own*, illustrates this point even more directly. Depicting the struggles women faced in intellectual spheres due to men's grip on legal and economic power within society, Woolf described the intense barriers women must overcome in order to achieve Anthony's image of happiness.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, following the passage of the

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<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joselyn Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage, Volume I 1848-1861* (Rochester: Charles Mann, 1889), 70-71, accessed January 3, 2015, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/28020/28020-h/28020-h.htm>.

<sup>20</sup> Ida Husted Harper, *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony: Including Public Addresses, Her Own Letters and Many From Her Contemporaries During Fifty Years* (Charleston: Nabu Press, 2010), 1351.

<sup>21</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Publishing, 2012), 6.

19th Amendment and with the rise of women's economic importance during the World Wars, advances in feminist thought and interest in the women's movement waned somewhat between the 1920s and 1950s.

### Second-Wave Feminism: The Personal is Political

The leftist movements of the 1960s generated renewed interest in feminist issues, aligning the feminist struggle with civil rights, environmental stewardship, and broader social reformation goals. Characterized by a campaign to liberate women from oppression, discrimination, and the structures of family in an effort to allow women to pursue their happiness, second wave feminist theory sought to explain and invalidate the basis for society's devaluation of women. The slogan "the personal is political" came to define second-wave feminism's focus on the link between personal experience and larger social and political structures.<sup>22</sup> The movement emphasized the importance of paid careers and higher education and influenced significant increases in the number of women getting advanced degrees and entering the paid-labor force—a change so monumental that in 1970 *The Wall Street Journal* dubbed "the working woman" the greatest change in American life since the Industrial Revolution.<sup>23</sup>

Second-wave feminist theorists rejected the concept of gender essentialism "on the grounds that universal claims about women are invariably false and effectively normalize and privilege specific forms of femininity."<sup>24</sup> Instead, the roots of second wave feminist theory lie in

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<sup>22</sup> Carol Hanisch, "The Personal is Political: The Women's Liberation Movement Classic with a New Explanatory Introduction," January 2006, accessed February 18, 2015, <http://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Gloria Steinem, *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983), 167.

<sup>24</sup> Alison Stone, "Essentialism and Anti-Essentialism in Feminist Philosophy," *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (2004): 135-136, accessed February 2, 2015, [http://www.academia.edu/1629266/Essentialism\\_and\\_Anti-](http://www.academia.edu/1629266/Essentialism_and_Anti-)



constructivism as first adopted by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, widely considered the seminal work of second-wave feminism.<sup>25</sup> Published in 1949, Beauvoir defined the term “sex” as the biological determination of male or female, distinguishing it from the social definition of feminine and masculine or “gender.” She went on to stress the pervasiveness of collectively held ideas and beliefs and noted that gender roles are learned through the process of socialization. Beauvoir noted, “[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes, woman,” taking Wollstonecraft’s theory one-step further and completely discrediting the notion of gender essentialism.<sup>26</sup>

Beauvoir heavily influenced a plethora of her contemporaries, none more prominent than Betty Friedan, who wrote a book, *The Feminine Mystique*, that catalyzed the second-wave feminist movement. Published in 1963, Friedan’s work deconstructs society’s expectations of women, this time focusing on the assumption that a woman’s innate role in society is to be a housewife and describing the intense dissatisfaction many of her peers were experiencing in fulfilling that expectation.<sup>27</sup> Friedan proposed “a new plan for women” in which she implored women to look for jobs outside the home equal to their capacity—jobs that would challenge them intellectually and therefore emancipate themselves from society’s expectations. She noted, “the

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Essentialism\_in\_Feminist\_Philosophy.

<sup>25</sup> Sonia Kruks, “Beauvoir’s Time/Our Time: The Renaissance in Simone de Beauvoir Studies,” *Feminist Studies* 31, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 286, accessed February 16, 2015, [http://www.jstor.org/stable/20459027?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20459027?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents); Brittany Swackhamer, “Feminism 101: The Second Wave,” *Feminism Examiner*, February 28, 2011, accessed February 16, 2015, <http://www.examiner.com/article/feminism-101-the-second-wave>; Rosie Germain, “Second Coming,” *Red Pepper* (Blog), July 2010, accessed February 16, 2015, <http://www.redpepper.org.uk/second-coming/>; Larrey Anderson, “The Feminine Mistake,” *American Thinker*, November 29, 2009, accessed February 16, 2015, [http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2009/11/the\\_feminine\\_mistake\\_1.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2009/11/the_feminine_mistake_1.html).

<sup>26</sup> de Beauvoir, 183.

<sup>27</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 34-115.

only way for a woman, as for a man, to find herself, to know herself as a person, is by creative work of her own.”<sup>28</sup>

An even more radical school of feminist thought emerged with the New Left in the late 1960s and argued that mankind had damaged the moral cloth of society, warping the character of both men and women. This eventually became known as the women’s liberation movement. Women’s liberation feminist theory, based on a combination of neo-Marxism and psychoanalysis, claimed that patriarchy is inherent in a bourgeois capitalist society and denounced the Freudian theory of women’s “natural” dependence and sexual frigidity.<sup>29</sup> *The Female Eunuch*, the incendiary work of Germaine Greer, typified this theory, arguing that social institutions dominated by men had taught women to hate themselves. She went on to declare that it was only through revolution, not evolution or even rebellion, that societal change could occur, for “[i]t is not a sign of revolution when the oppressed adopt the manners of the oppressors and practice oppression on their own behalf...the attempt to relax the severity of the polarity in law bears no relation to the sway that male-female notions hold in the minds and hearts of real people.”<sup>30</sup>

#### Post-Feminism: The Backlash

Though scholars disagree about the precise end date of second-wave feminism, it is generally accepted that by the 1980’s, in the view of broader society, the women’s liberation movement and feminist theory had become synonymous with pre-marital sex, abortion, divorce, hippy culture, and any number of other socio-cultural changes that were seen by many as

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<sup>28</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton & Company, Inc., 2013), 416.

<sup>29</sup> Krolokke and Sorensen, 9.

<sup>30</sup> Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (London: McGraw-Hill, 1970), 335.

threatening to “the American way of life.”<sup>31</sup> Media outlets painted a rosy picture of the status of women, showing ever-increasing numbers of women earning college degrees and entering competitive professions, indicating that the struggle for equality had ended and that there was nothing left for which to fight.<sup>32</sup> Simultaneously, the media portrayed a slew of societal ills as caused by women working outside the home.<sup>33</sup> The media warned women about epidemic levels of “burnout,” infertility, depression, and even a “man shortage.” The rise of “latch-key kids” was seen as the fault of women who chose careers over their children and the insecurity and inevitable failure of those children was endlessly foretold.<sup>34</sup> The trope of the successful career woman, miserable with her lonely life in a Fifth Avenue penthouse, endlessly searching for the right man to complete her, was relentlessly perpetuated by Hollywood. Publications from *Vanity Fair* to the *New York Times* discussed ‘the failures of feminism’ and ‘the feminist lie.’<sup>35</sup>

The severe backlash, generally referred to as post-feminism, that quickly developed against the feminist movement stalled—and in many ways even negated—many of the advances

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<sup>31</sup> Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Three River Press, 1991); Anita M. Spuerson and Ann E. Cudd, *Theorizing Backlash: Philosophical Reflections on the Resistance to Feminism* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2002); Vicki Coppock, Deena Haydon, and Ingrid Richer, *The Illusions of Post-Feminism: New Women, Old Myths* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 3-14; Jen Roesch, “Turning Back the Clock: Women, Work and Family Today,” *International Socialist Review* 38 (November-December 2004), accessed April 1, 2015, [http://www.isreview.org/issues/38/women\\_family.shtml](http://www.isreview.org/issues/38/women_family.shtml).

<sup>32</sup> tekanji, “FAQ: What is ‘Post-feminism’?” *Finally, A Feminism 101 Blog*, August 25, 2007, accessed February 3, 2015, <https://finallyfeminism101.wordpress.com/2007/08/25/faq-what-is-post-feminism/>.

<sup>33</sup> Stephanie Hallett, “Feminist Backlash, Then and Now,” *Ms. Magazine Blog*, March 8, 2011, accessed February 3, 2015, <http://msmagazine.com/blog/2011/03/08/feminist-backlash-then-and-now/>.

<sup>34</sup> Betsy Israel, *Bachelor Girl: 100 Years of Breaking the Rules—A Social History of Living Single* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), 247-264.

<sup>35</sup> Faludi, 1-7.

that had been achieved. Society's unspoken message was clear. Women should marry early, have children young—while they still could—and stay home to invest in their children and families instead of selfishly devoting themselves to a career.<sup>36</sup> As Susan Faludi described in her book *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, the admonition was “[w]omen are unhappy precisely because they are free. Women are enslaved by their own liberation. They have grabbed at the gold ring of independence, only to miss the one ring that really matters. They have gained control of their fertility, only to destroy it. They have pursued their own professional dreams—and lost out on the greatest female adventure.”<sup>37</sup> While these repercussions certainly continue in the media and popular culture and even within families today, a new generation of feminist theorists emerged near the end of the 20th century and made their presence known in areas ranging from popular culture to Wall Street to global politics.<sup>38</sup>

### Third-Wave Feminism: Postmodern Grrrls

Postmodern and poststructuralist in nature, with an “emphasis on destabilizing fixed definitions of gender and rejection of unitary notions of ‘woman’ and ‘feminism’ ... third-wave feminist ideas about identity embraced notions of contradiction, multiplicity, and ambiguity, building on postmodern theory's critique of ideas about the unified self and engaging with the

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<sup>36</sup> Stephanie Genz and Benjamin A. Brabon, *Postfeminism: Cultural Texts and Theories* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 51-52.

<sup>37</sup> Faludi, 2-268.

<sup>38</sup> Kate O'Beirne, *Women who Make the World Worse: and How Their Radical Feminist Assault is Ruining Our Schools, Families, Military, and Sports* (New York: Penguin, 2006); Guy Garcia, *The Decline of Men: How the American Male is Getting Axed, Giving Up, and Flipping Off his Future* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008); Lia Macko and Kerry Rubin, *Midlife Crisis at 30: How the Stakes have Changed for a New Generation—And What to do About It* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004); Suzanne Venker and Phyllis Schlafly, *The Flipside of Feminism: What Conservative Women Know—and Men Can't Say* (Medford, OR: WND Books, 2011).

fluid nature of gender and sexual identity.”<sup>39</sup> While third-wave feminists clearly separated themselves from second-wavers in many areas, they did not wholly reject many key tenets of their predecessors. In this way, they removed themselves from the post-feminists. Most critically, the search for greater opportunity for women and abatement of social boundaries between the sexes remained a central thesis for third-wave feminists.<sup>40</sup>

Third-wave feminists dismissed the concept of gender realism, the idea that women have some feature in common that creates a singular female experience.<sup>41</sup> Feminists who rejected this theory pointed out that if there were some “golden nugget of womanness” shared by all women, then all women would experience womanhood and pursue happiness in the same way—an idea they rejected.<sup>42</sup> Just as they eschewed the concept that there is a universal definition of “woman,” third-wave feminists also rejected the notion that there is a monolithic uniform “feminist.” Rebecca Walker, one of the original third-wave feminists, explained, “for many of us it seems that to be a feminist in the way that we have seen or understood feminism is to conform to an identity and way of living that doesn’t allow for individuality, complexity, or less than perfect personal histories. We fear that the identity will dictate and regulate our lives, instantly pitting us against someone, forcing us to choose sides.”<sup>43</sup> This view directly contradicts the opinion of

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<sup>39</sup> Leslie L. Heywood, ed. *The Women’s Movement Today: An Encyclopedia of Third-Wave Feminism, Volume 1* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2006), 257-258.

<sup>40</sup> Genz and Brabon, 65-67.

<sup>41</sup> J.A. Fisher, “Today’s Feminism: A Brief Look at Third-Wave Feminism,” *Being Feminist: The Official Blog*, May 16, 2013, accessed February 9, 2015, <https://beingfeministblog.wordpress.com/2013/05/16/todays-feminism-a-brief-look-at-third-wave-feminism/>.

<sup>42</sup> Elizabeth Spelman, *Inessential Woman* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), 159.

<sup>43</sup> Rebecca Walker, “To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism,” in *The Women’s Movement Today: An Encyclopedia of Third-Wave Feminism, Volume 2*, ed. Leslie Heywood (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2006) 22.

many previous feminists who saw higher education, employment, and independence as the only viable path for an enlightened modern woman.

While third-wave feminists celebrated individuality, they simultaneously embraced inclusiveness and diversity. Third-wavers feared that feminism in the past succumbed to cultural imperialism, extrapolating the values and experiences of a single segment of Western society onto society as a whole.<sup>44</sup> In rejecting that approach, multiplicity among race, socioeconomic status, generation, and sexual orientation became critical to the third-wave movement.<sup>45</sup> This multiplicity led to the inclusion of intersectionality in feminist literature—the acknowledgment that a variety of identities are simultaneously present in any individual—black/white, gay/straight, rich/poor, urban/rural, etc.—impacting the actions of that individual and the unique ways they perceive society.<sup>46</sup>

Understanding that there are contradictions inherent in everyday life, third-wave feminists accepted pluralism as part of reality.<sup>47</sup> They therefore acknowledged each individual's right to choose how they will behave in the face of the incongruities they face. Third-wave feminists refused to follow a constrictive feminist party line that attempted to tell them how they should interact with society.<sup>48</sup> For example, a third-wave feminist would be fully aware of, and

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<sup>44</sup> Katharine Viner. "Feminism as Imperialism," *The Guardian*, September 20, 2002, accessed April 1, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/sep/21/gender.usa>.

<sup>45</sup> Martha Rampton, "The Three Waves of Feminism," Pacific Oregon University, October 23, 2014, accessed November 20, 2014, <http://www.pacificu.edu/about-us/news-events/three-waves-feminism>.

<sup>46</sup> thinking girl, "Feminism Friday—Intersectional Identity," *Thinking Girl* (blog), March 12, 2006, accessed March 1, 2015, <https://thinkinggirl.wordpress.com/2006/05/12/feminism-friday-intersectional-identity/>; Naomi Zack, *Inclusive Feminism: A Third Wave Theory of Women's Commonality* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 2-8.

<sup>47</sup> Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1987), 21-27.

<sup>48</sup> R. Claire Snyder, "What is Third Wave Feminism?: A New Directions Essay," *Signs*

decry, the misogyny of the cosmetics industry, but she may choose to wear make-up. She understood the inconsistency of her position, but accepted that the complex nature of society requires such pluralism. A second-wave feminist, however, is likely to see such a decision as “selling out” to patriarchal values and may condemn her for that choice.<sup>49</sup>

Rejecting the esoteric theoretical texts prized by previous generations, third-wave feminists communicated their ideas largely through personal accounts and autobiographies. “Because it responds to a fragmented postmodern world that has moved beyond grand narratives like Marxism and radical feminism, third-wave feminism did not attempt to present a unified vision of with which every woman can agree. Consequently, third-wavers did not feel the need to spend a lot of time constructing ambitious theoretical analyses or justifying on what grounds they acted; they just did. Others could either join them or do their own thing.”<sup>50</sup> While this focus on micro politics made feminism more accessible and digestible to the new audience, it also denied the third-wavers credibility from other segments of society who used the perceived lack of academic rigor in these works to discredit them.<sup>51</sup> The approach did enable the feminist thinkers to attract a new generation of feminists, however, by appealing to their preferred communication methods. Feminists embraced pop culture through “grrrl culture,” initiating the reclamation of previously pejorative terms such as “girl,” “bitch,” and “feminist.” They accepted that part of the work of feminism is recognizing and accepting that aesthetics, beauty, and fun really do matter,

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34, no. 1 (Autumn 2008): 176.

<sup>49</sup> Krista Jacob, “Analyzing Third Wave Feminism: Engendering Change: What’s Up with the Third Wave?” *The Feminist eZine*, 1998, accessed January 20, 2015, <http://www.feministezine.com/feminist/historical/Third-Wave-Feminism.html>.

<sup>50</sup> Snyder, 178-184.

<sup>51</sup> Stacy Gillis and Rebecca Monford, “Genealogies and Generations: The Politics and Praxis of Third Wave Feminism,” *Women’s History Review* 13, no. 2 (2004): 167-169, accessed February 4, 2015, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09612020400200388>.

producing “lipstick feminism.” In addition, they welcomed a new generation of fringe bloggers through “cyber feminism.”<sup>52</sup> Any one of these avenues would likely have been anathema to previous generations, but their inclusion in third-wave feminism enabled the movement to spread far beyond feminism’s traditional spheres.

Finally, third-wave feminists, like their forbearers, sought increasingly equal opportunity for men and women in both the workplace and the schoolhouse.<sup>53</sup> While acknowledging huge advances in women’s access to higher education and commiserate professions, third-wave feminists advocated for further barriers to be removed, as well as equal distribution of pay, promotions, bonuses and recognition. They expanded the movement to encourage women to enter not only positions of political power, but also those of economic power.<sup>54</sup>

#### Fourth-Wave Feminism: Leaning In

Many scholars view the 2008 presidential primaries, which pitted Barak Obama against Hillary Clinton, as the beginning of fourth wave feminism.<sup>55</sup> The overwhelmingly misogynistic tones that defined the backlash against Clinton’s campaign also forced women around the United States to acknowledge that while women had made great strides, they were not, as society had

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<sup>52</sup> Krolokke and Sorensen, 15-21.

<sup>53</sup> Kelsey Lueptow, “Feminism Now: What the Third Wave is Really About,” *Everyday Feminism Magazine*, January 10, 2014, accessed February 9, 2015, <http://everydayfeminism.com/2014/01/feminism-now/>.

<sup>54</sup> Alana Wingfoot, “Different Generations, Different Issues,” *The Feminist eZine*, 1998, accessed February 9, 2015, <http://www.feministezine.com/feminist/historical/Third-Wave-Feminism.html>.

<sup>55</sup> Jennifer Baumgardner, *F'em: Goo Goo, Gaga and Some Thoughts on Balls*, 12-13; Amanda Fortini, “The Feminist Reawakening: Hillary Clinton and the Fourth Wave,” *New York Magazine*, April 13, 2008, accessed February 10, 2015, <http://nymag.com/news/features/46011/>; Violet Socks [pseud.], “How Would You Define the Fourth Wave of Feminism?,” *Reclusive Leftist* (Blog), June 17, 2009, accessed February 15, 2015, <http://www.reclusiveleftist.com/2009/06/17/how-would-you-define-the-fourth-wave-of-feminism/>.



claimed, living in a post-feminist world. When a woman was competing for the highest job in the nation, the gross sexism that characterized the attacks against her was impossible to ignore.<sup>56</sup> Fourth wave feminism grew out of this period in American politics as an attempt to open both men's and women's eyes to the outstanding problems in society and dispel the notion that feminism is pointless because the problems it attempts to address are already solved.

Overwhelmingly defined by technology, the fourth wave of the feminist movement in America maintained many foci and approaches championed by third wave feminists. Popular websites, social networking, and on-line campaigns are reaching an entirely new generation of feminists and while the activism generated through those campaigns has been derisively referred to as "slacktivism" by some—the Occupy movement and "Bring Back Our Girls" campaign serve as good examples of this—there is no denying the vast reach and impact these tools are having.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Jonathan Tilove, "Hillary Hatred Finds its Misogynistic Voice," *The Seattle Times*, November 29, 2007, accessed February 10, 2015, [http://seattletimes.com/html/politics/2004041541\\_hillaryslurs29.html](http://seattletimes.com/html/politics/2004041541_hillaryslurs29.html); Katharine Q. Seelye and Julie Bosman, "Media Charged With Sexism in Clinton Coverage," *The New York Times*, June 13, 2008, accessed February 10, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/13/us/politics/13women.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/13/us/politics/13women.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0); Paul Bedard, "Media Sexism Doomed Hillary's 2008 Bid," *US News and World Report*, December 23, 2011, accessed February 10, 2015, <http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/washington-whispers/2011/12/23/media-sexism-doomed-hillarys-2008-bid>; Amy King, "Feminist Resurgence?," *Amy King's Alias* (Blog), April 19, 2008, accessed February 8, 2015, <https://amyking.wordpress.com/2008/04/19/feminist-resurgence/>; Imran, "The Right Woman for the Job," *WMST 2010 A: Feminist Analysis* (Blog), April 25, 2008, accessed February 13, 2015, <http://ugafeminism.blogspot.com/2008/04/right-woman-for-job.html>.

<sup>57</sup> Kira Cochrane, "The Fourth Wave of Feminism: Meet the Rebel Women," *The Guardian*, December 10, 2013, accessed March 10, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/10/fourth-wave-feminism-rebel-women>; "Dynamics of Cause Engagement," Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide and Georgetown University's Center for Social Impact Communication, November 2011, accessed March 14, 2015, <http://www.slideshare.net/georgetowncsic/dynamics-of-cause-engagement-final-report>; Yu-Hao Lee and Gary Hsieh, "Does Slacktivism Hurt Activism?: The Effects of Moral Balancing and Consistency in Online Activism," Michigan State University, 2013, accessed March 14, 2015, <http://faculty.washington.edu/garyhs/docs/lee-chi2013-slacktivism.pdf>; Katya Andresen, "Why Slacktivism Is Underrated," *Mashable*, October 24, 2011, accessed March 10, 2014, <http://mashable.com/2011/10/24/slactivism-cause-engagement/>; Julia Schuster, "Invisible

Journalistic coverage of feminist issues has started to increase in recent years, with many local and national media outlets report on the myriad issues facing women in America.

The idea of intersectionality remains a key concept in fourth wave feminism. However, in this new wave the complimentary theory of kyriarchy has gained traction. Kyriarchy posits that while a person can identify with multiple identities surrounding their gender, race, sexuality, socioeconomic status, etc., society stratifies each of those identities differently, so simultaneously the various aspects of one's identity can be experienced through oppression or privilege.<sup>58</sup> Kyriarchy holds that privileged positions become the node through which one views the world, therefore when one is privileged from the perspective of their gender identity, gender becomes the principal way in which they view the world.<sup>59</sup> "Check your privilege" has become a familiar refrain in fourth wave feminist work and seeks to remind activists and writers that they cannot and should not speak for others due to their own inevitable privilege.<sup>60</sup>

The impact of the sexism seen in the 2008 primary campaign cannot be overstated when reviewing contemporary feminist writing. Feminists often point out that American women have been earning more college degrees than their male colleagues have since 1960 and more master's degrees since 1985, yet in 2010 median earnings for women working full-time, year-round were

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Feminists? Social Media and Young Women's Political Participation," *Political Science*, 65, no. 1 (2013): 20-23; Henrik Serup Christensen, "Political Activities on the Internet: Slacktivism or Political Participation by Other Means?" *First Monday* 16, no. 2, February 7, 2011, accessed March 15, 2015, <http://firstmonday.org/article/view/3336/2767>.

<sup>58</sup> Kira Cochrane, *All the Rebel Women: The Rise of the Fourth Wave of Feminism* (London: Guardian Shorts, 2014), 134-162.

<sup>59</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 167; Sian Ferguson, "Kyriarchy 101: We're Not Just Fighting the Patriarchy Anymore," *Everyday Feminism* (Blog), April 23, 2014, accessed March 13, 2015, <http://everydayfeminism.com/2014/04/kyriarchy-101/>.

<sup>60</sup> Ealasaid Munro, "Feminism: A Fourth Wave?" *Political Studies Association* (Blog), accessed April 10, 2015, <http://www.psa.ac.uk/insight-plus/feminism-fourth-wave>.

just 81 percent of men's earnings.<sup>61</sup> The cause of this pay gap is often disputed and the issue has become highly politicized, but to the feminists working on this issue, the important fact is that this dichotomy still exists in America and its many root causes must be addressed.<sup>62</sup> Among the new generation of feminists, who grew up during the recession being told that they were unlikely to ever be hired in careers commiserate with their education, this new cause has emerged as one of the most important for activists.<sup>63</sup>

Sheryl Sandberg's recent book, *Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead*, reignited the discussion of women in the professional sphere, further catalyzing the new movement. Debates raged about whether or not women could "have it all," whether "having it all" was in fact good for society, and what "having it all" even meant.<sup>64</sup> Some women found in this debate a renewed energy that led them to aim higher in their careers than they had previously considered. Still more wondered how they could have both a high-powered career as well as a family, leading

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<sup>61</sup> Thomas A. DiPrete and Claudia Buchmann, *The Rise of Women: The Growing Gender Gap in Education and What It Means for American Schools* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2013), 23-56; US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Women's Earnings as a Percent of Men's in 2010," January 10, 2012, accessed February 12, 2015, [http://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2012/ted\\_20120110.htm](http://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2012/ted_20120110.htm).

<sup>62</sup> While some analysts argue that systematic discrimination, perhaps beginning as early as elementary school, caused the gender wage gap in America, others point to personal decisions made by American women, including the types of careers they choose, frequency of changing careers and taking breaks during a career path. For more on this discussion, see the American Association of University Women's publication *The Simple Truth about the Gender Pay Gap*, the Institute for Women's Policy Research's *Gender Wage Gap Fact Sheets*, or the Center for American Progress's report "What Causes the Gender Wage Gap?."

<sup>63</sup> Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 128-130.

<sup>64</sup> Slaughter; Jennifer Szalai, "The Complicated Origins of 'Having It All'," *The New York Times Magazine*, January 2, 2015, accessed January 2, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/04/magazine/the-complicated-origins-of-having-it-all.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/04/magazine/the-complicated-origins-of-having-it-all.html?_r=0); Rosa Brooks, "Recline, don't 'Lean In' (Why I hate Sheryl Sandberg)," *The Washington Post*, February 25, 2014, accessed November 14, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/she-the-people/wp/2014/02/25/recline-dont-lean-in-why-i-hate-sheryl-sandberg/>.

some to consider the importance of including men in traditionally “feminine” role such as rearing children.<sup>65</sup> Others viewed it as proof of gender functionalism—that roles in family, institutions, and society were necessarily divided along gender lines and that biological differences between men and women made it essential that women maintain the burden of the household and children.<sup>66</sup> While the concept of “having it all” may be a divisive one, for most fourth wave feminists, the root of the issue comes back to the increased availability of options for men and women in both the personal and professional spheres.

Some contemporary feminists are “opting out” of the workforce—rejecting the corporate ladder in favor of staying at home to raise families.<sup>67</sup> Raising children, caring for sick or elderly parents, exploring new interests or education, letting their spouse follow their professional interests—while men would infrequently leave their job in order to pursue these commitments, women often choose to take a break from their careers in order to do so.<sup>68</sup> However, if these trends are not a product of increased choice but are an economic necessity, then women are not experiencing the greater choice demanded by feminism. If women are not “opting out” but instead are being pushed out of their high-powered careers due to the difficulty of raising a family while working in America as studies are starting to suggest, this becomes a feminist issue.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Lindy West, “No One 'Has It All,' Because 'Having It All' Doesn't Exist,” *Jezebel*, June 22, 2012, accessed November 11, 2015, <http://jezebel.com/5920625/no-one-has-it-all-because-having-it-all-doesnt-exist>.

<sup>66</sup> Lisa Miller, “The Retro Wife: Feminists Who Say They’re Having it All—By Choosing to Stay Home,” *New York Magazine*, March 17, 2013, accessed November 10, 2014, <http://nymag.com/news/features/retro-wife-2013-3/>.

<sup>67</sup> Lisa Belkin, “The Opt-Out Revolution,” *The New York Times*, October 26, 2003, accessed October 11, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/26/magazine/26WOMEN.html>.

<sup>68</sup> Tracey Wilen-Daugenti, “Labyrinths, Not Ladders: How Women are Redefining Work,” *The Huffington Post, Women*, January 15, 2011, accessed November 20, 2014, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-tracey-wilendaugenti/women-and-work\\_b\\_2473153.html?](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-tracey-wilendaugenti/women-and-work_b_2473153.html?)

<sup>69</sup> Gretchen Livingston, “Opting out? About 10% of Highly Educated Moms are Staying at Home,” Pew Research Center Fact Tank, May 7, 2014, accessed February 10, 2015,

Similarly, if economic disparities are driving these decisions and women are leaving the careers they love because someone needs to stay home and their husbands are out-earning them, the women achieved the equity for which they have fought.<sup>70</sup>

Many feminists are starting to talk less about the obstacles faced by women and more about the obstacles faced by mothers.<sup>71</sup> Career-building years (ages 25-44) coincide with women's peak fertility. Since women began pursuing professional fulfillment in large numbers during the second wave feminist movement, they have been told that they need to choose between achieving their professional goals and having a family. Lack of maternity leave, prohibitively expensive childcare, and continued societal expectations that "good mothers" give up their own pursuits in favor of their children all combine to make the quest for advancement to the highest levels extremely difficult for women.<sup>72</sup> All too often, those women are not able to re-enter the workforce because employers are less likely to hire women with children and, if they do hire them, mothers will generally earn a lower salary than their male or childless female peers—the so-called "motherhood penalty."<sup>73</sup> Feminism has a role to play in ensuring that employers

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<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/05/07/opting-out-about-10-of-highly-educated-moms-are-staying-at-home/>.

<sup>70</sup> Tiziana Barghini, "Educated Women Quit Work as Spouses Earn More," *Reuters*, March 8, 2012, accessed March 24, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/08/us-economy-women-idUSBRE8270AC20120308>.

<sup>71</sup> Claire Cain Miller, "The Motherhood Penalty vs. the Fatherhood Bonus: A Child Helps Your Career, if You're a Man," *The New York Times*, September 6, 2014, accessed November 11, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/07/upshot/a-child-helps-your-career-if-youre-a-man.html?abt=0002&abg=0>; Shelley J. Correll, Stephen Benard, and In Paik, "Getting a Job: Is There a Motherhood Penalty?," *American Journal of Sociology* 112, no. 5 (March 2007): 1297-1339.

<sup>72</sup> Sarah Glynn, "On Pay Equity Day, Why Women Are Paid Less Than Men," *Think Progress*, April 9, 2013, accessed March 28, 2014, <http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2013/04/09/1839281/on-equal-pay-day-why-women-are-paid-less-than-men/>.

<sup>73</sup> "The Simple Truth About the Gender Pay Gap, 2015 Edition," American Association of University Women (AAUW), accessed March 10, 2015,

understand why women are making the choices they are and in helping organizations adapt their career paths to this increasingly necessary non-linear course.

Throughout its history, feminism has been a highly controversial and politicized phenomenon. As American historian and feminist thinker Estelle Freedman wrote, “feminism is a belief that although women and men are inherently of equal worth, most societies privilege men as a group. As a result, social movements are necessary to achieve political equality between women and men, with the understanding that gender always intersects with other social hierarchies.”<sup>74</sup> While there are important differences separating the four waves of the feminist movement as described above, a number of common themes, highlighted in each of the waves, show the cohesiveness of the feminist movement throughout time. The importance of ensuring that each individual is free to choose and follow their own path to happiness without legal or societal restrictions may be the most important among those common threads.

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[http://www.aauw.org/files/2015/02/The-Simple-Truth\\_Spring-2015.pdf](http://www.aauw.org/files/2015/02/The-Simple-Truth_Spring-2015.pdf).

<sup>74</sup> Freedman, *xviii*

## History of Women in the Foreign Service

### Women's Employment in America

The history of women's participation in the public sector broadly, and in the Foreign Service specifically, has largely mirrored the "waves" of the feminist movement in the United States. While private industry, driven by profit-making motivations, historically acquiesced to the hiring of women when the role was seen as "acceptable" for women or when some external situation made it absolutely necessary, the American public sector has historically been more reticent and thus slower to hire women.

Women's participation in the American economy began in earnest in the second half of the 18th century with the invention of spinning jenny, a technology that gave rise to the textile industry. Women were seen as natural workers in these factories, as they were the ones with weaving and spinning skills and this was generally acknowledged as "women's work."<sup>75</sup> In 1803, with the Louisiana Purchase, the newly acquired territories required additional teachers and the lack of suitable male candidates quickly lead many schools to hire women.<sup>76</sup> These teaching positions presented the first opportunity for women to have not just a job, but to pursue a career. This need was replicated throughout the frontier as the United States' territory expanded west, providing additional opportunities and leading to increased interest among women in pursuing careers.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Jone Johnson Lewis, "Women and Work in Early America: Before the Domestic Sphere," *About.com*, accessed March 24, 2015, [http://womenshistory.about.com/od/worklaborunions/a/early\\_america.htm](http://womenshistory.about.com/od/worklaborunions/a/early_america.htm).

<sup>76</sup> Chris Enss, *Frontier Teachers: Stories of Heroic Women of the Old West* (Guilford, CT: TwoDot, 2008), 14.

<sup>77</sup> Christopher W. Czajka, "'Usually the Teacher has Nothing to Say About the Situation for the Schoolhouse': Frontier Education and the One-Room Schoolhouse," *Frontier Life, Public Broadcasting Station*, accessed March 24, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/frontierhouse/frontierlife/essay10.html>.

The wider American private sector did not begin to hire women until the final decades of the 1800's, when the enabling social, economic, and technological advances coalesced to facilitate the entrance of women in larger numbers into the workforce. American society loosened many of the cultural constraints limiting women to household work when the economy required hiring women to take over a significant number of manufacturing jobs for men during the Civil War.<sup>78</sup> Following the war, many women relinquished those jobs, returning to the housework traditionally associated with women's roles in America.<sup>79</sup> A great number of women, however, either could not leave those jobs for economic reasons or chose to remain in the labor market due to the emerging respectability of office jobs. Employers were largely willing to keep women on their staff due to the relatively low wages of women compared with men, as well as the rapid growth businesses were experiencing at this time. Simultaneous with these economic and social changes, the invention of the typewriter revolutionized American business. Seen as gender-neutral and respectable, typist positions offered the ideal niche for women.<sup>80</sup> The public sector was somewhat slower to hire women than private industry, but government agencies eventually followed the prevailing trends and hired women to fill their clerical positions.<sup>81</sup> In both public

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<sup>78</sup> Mary Robinson Sive, "American Women at Work in the Nineteenth Century," Historical Text Archive, accessed March 24, 2015, <http://historicaltextarchive.com/sections.php?action=read&artid=785>.

<sup>79</sup> Catherine Clinton, *The Other Civil War: American Women in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999), 90.

<sup>80</sup> Claudia Goldin, "The Quiet Revolution That Transformed Women's Employment, Education, and Family," Richard T. Ely Lecture: 5, accessed March 24, 2015, [http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/goldin/files/the\\_quiet\\_revolution\\_that\\_transformed\\_womens\\_employment\\_education\\_and\\_family.pdf](http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/goldin/files/the_quiet_revolution_that_transformed_womens_employment_education_and_family.pdf).

<sup>81</sup> Sharon Hartman Strom, "'Light Manufacturing': The Feminization of American Office Work, 1900-1930," *Industrial Labor Relations Review* 43, no. 1: 55-56, accessed March 24, 2015, <http://ilr.sagepub.com/content/43/1/53.full.pdf+html>.



and private sectors, however, women were only welcome in offices to fill typist, clerical, and secretarial positions.<sup>82</sup>

In 1883, the US Congress passed the Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act. Generally considered America's first Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) law, the Pendleton Act established a merit-based system of selecting government officials and supervising their work.<sup>83</sup> In 1923, at the end of the first wave feminist movement, the USG passed the complimentary Classification Act, which established a uniform system of job grades and salaries and ensured equal pay for equal work within the public sector.<sup>84</sup> Neither of these laws, however, guaranteed equal access to jobs for women. Further, they applied only to federal government jobs, excluding state and local government, as well as private industry, and therefore affected a relatively small number of workers.<sup>85</sup>

According to the 1920 Census, by that year just over 8 million American women (21 percent of the nation's female population aged 16 and over), representing 20 percent of the American workforce, were "gainfully employed." Only 12 percent of those women identified

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<sup>82</sup> Donald Hoke, "The Woman and the Typewriter: A Case Study in Technological Innovation and Social Change," Milwaukee Public Museum, 78, accessed February 17, 2015, <http://www.thebhc.org/sites/default/files/beh/BEHprint/v008/p0076-p0088.pdf>.

<sup>83</sup> US Congress, *An Act to Regulate and Improve the Civil Service of the United States*, January 16, 1883, Enrolled Acts and Resolutions of Congress, 1789-1996, General Records of the United States Government, National Archives, accessed March 24, 2015, <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=48>.

<sup>84</sup> US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Wage Chronology No. 13: Federal Classification Act Employees: 1924-1950," *Monthly Labor* 72, no. 3 (March 1951): 296, accessed March 24, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/41832309?sid=21106379068843&uid=2134&uid=67&uid=2&uid=70&uid=383358141&uid=3&uid=3739256&uid=62&uid=20778&uid=2129&uid=3739552>.

<sup>85</sup> Tiffany K. Wayne and Lois Banner, eds. *Women's Women's Rights in the United States: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Issues, Rights and People* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CIO, 2014), 85.

themselves as participating in the “professional sector” (mostly teachers and nurses) and 17 percent in “clerical work” (including clerks, typists and bookkeepers). The highlight of the 1928 report released by the Department of Labor’s Women’s Bureau regarding this information was the perceived high percentage of employed women who were married (23 percent overall), a social trend that started to take off in the 1920s and increased rapidly over the next several decades.<sup>86</sup>

Overall, the period between the first and second waves of the feminist movement saw trends relating to women’s employment outside the home increasing and decreasing frequently. The Great Depression had a detrimental impact on women’s participation in the formal American economy; forced to reduce staff in the face of a declining economy, employers commonly chose to dismiss women whose employment society considered less critical to family survival.<sup>87</sup> In fact, during this time “26 states had laws prohibiting the employment of married women” to keep married women from “stealing” jobs from men.<sup>88</sup> The federal government passed similar measures, including the 1932 Federal Economy Act, which prohibited the government from hiring married women if their husbands were Civil Service employees—this law did not impede the hiring of husbands based upon their wives’ employment status.<sup>89</sup> The years of WWII saw a

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<sup>86</sup> Rebecca Onion, “Vintage Infographics: Where Women Worked in 1920,” *Slate*, March 11, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, [http://www.slate.com/blogs/the\\_vault/2013/03/11/women\\_workers\\_infographics\\_show\\_women\\_s\\_employment\\_in\\_1920.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_vault/2013/03/11/women_workers_infographics_show_women_s_employment_in_1920.html).

<sup>87</sup> Laura Hapke, *Daughters of the Great Depression: Women, Work and Fiction in the American 1930s* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 1-26.

<sup>88</sup> “Handout 14: Women and Work,” The University of West Georgia, accessed March 29, 2015, <http://www.westga.edu/~hgoodson/Women%20and%20Work.htm>.

<sup>89</sup> “The Depression and World War II (1930-1945),” National Women’s History Museum, History of Women in Industry, 2007, accessed March 25, 2015, <https://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/industry/13.htm>.

peak in women's employment, as men left to fight and manufacturing needs increased.<sup>90</sup> Following the war, however, many employers and husbands demanded that women relinquish those jobs, as men returned to the economy and manufacturing declined.<sup>91</sup> In the 1950s, American society experienced a period of nostalgia and patriotism; reacting to the desire for a "return to normalcy" and in response to the emergence of the Cold War, many women within the baby boomer generation embraced domesticity as their proper role.<sup>92</sup>

Second wave feminism's focus on making the personal political had significant impacts on US Government laws and policies. In 1961, in response to the increased clamor for political attention to women's issues, President Kennedy established the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW).<sup>93</sup> Charged with advising the President on issues affecting women in America, the Commission reviewed 421 pieces of proposed legislation concerning women. The PCSW issued its final report, entitled "American Women," in October 1963 and criticized the status of women while simultaneously acknowledging and accepting the importance of traditional gender roles. The report did make recommendations for future action, most notably calling for an end to sex discrimination in pay and hiring, including a repeal of "workplace protections" that

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<sup>90</sup> Doris Weatherford, *American Women During World War II: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Routledge, 2009), xi-xxv.

<sup>91</sup> "American Women in World War II: On the Home Front and Beyond," The National WWII Museum, New Orleans, accessed March 24, 2015, <http://www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education/for-students/ww2-history/at-a-glance/women-in-ww2.html>.

<sup>92</sup> "People & Events: Mrs. America: Women's Roles in the 1950s," The Pill, Public Broadcasting Company, *American Experience*, 2001, accessed March 25, 2015, [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/pill/peopleevents/p\\_mrs.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/pill/peopleevents/p_mrs.html); Nina Stoneham, "Women's Roles in the 1950s," *Weebly.com*, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://1950s.weebly.com/womens-roles.html>.

<sup>93</sup> John F. Kennedy, *Statement by the President on the Establishment of the President's Commission on the Status of Women*, December 14, 1961, The American Presidency Project, accessed February 10, 2015, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=8483>.

limited the types of jobs for which employers could hire women, paid maternity leave and universal childcare, and constitutional protection for women under the 14th Amendment.<sup>94</sup>

The report garnered significant media attention, raising expectations that politicians would increase the attention paid to issues facing women; leaders responded to those expectations quickly.<sup>95</sup> In 1963, Congress passed the Equal Pay Act (EPA) prohibiting “employer[s] ... [from] discrimination...on the basis of sex by paying wages to employees ... at a rate less than the rate [paid] to employees of the opposite sex ...for equal work on jobs [requiring] equal skill, effort, and responsibility, and which are performed under similar working conditions.”<sup>96</sup> The EPA was followed quickly by the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Title VII of which forbade discrimination in hiring, promoting, and firing based on sex as well as race. Both of these laws affected huge numbers of women as both public and private sector employers were now required to end gender-based discrimination.<sup>97</sup> In 1965 and 1968, President Johnson issued Executive Orders to reinforce these ideas, stating clearly that it was the policy of the USG to “provide equal opportunity to all qualified persons, prohibiting discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, and promoting equal employment opportunity in every executive agency.”<sup>98</sup> By 1970,

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<sup>94</sup> Presidential Commission on the Status of Women, *American Women: Report of the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women* (Washington, DC, 1963), 35-49.

<sup>95</sup> Elizabeth Singer More, “Report of the President’s Commission on the Status of Women: Background, Content, Significance,” Harvard University, accessed February 10, 2015, [https://www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/sites/radcliffe.harvard.edu/files/documents/report\\_of\\_the\\_presidents\\_commission\\_on\\_the\\_status\\_of\\_women\\_background\\_content\\_significance.pdf](https://www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/sites/radcliffe.harvard.edu/files/documents/report_of_the_presidents_commission_on_the_status_of_women_background_content_significance.pdf).

<sup>96</sup> US Congress, *Equal Pay Act of 1963* - 29 US Code Chapter 8 § 206(d), accessed February 19, 2015, <http://finduslaw.com/equal-pay-act-1963-epa-29-us-code-chapter-8-206d>.

<sup>97</sup> “Teaching With Documents: The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission,” The National Archives, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/civil-rights-act/>.

<sup>98</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson, *Executive Order Nos. 11246* (September 28, 1965) and *11375* (October 13, 1967), The American Presidency Project, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=60553>.

there were 31 million women, representing 38 percent of the workforce, working outside the home in America; those women, however, still made only 61 cents for every dollar earned by their male counterparts.<sup>99</sup>

In 1972, the Equal Rights Amendment passed Congress. The Amendment, which had been introduced in every Congress since 1923, would affirm the equal application of the Constitution to all citizens of the United States. Opposition, bolstered by the post-feminist movement, quickly formed and the necessary 38 states failed to ratify the Amendment in the ten years allotted for this process. Every Congress since 1982 has re-introduced the Amendment, but it has not gained sufficient political support to pass again.<sup>100</sup> In the meantime, the federal government has passed no significant legislation affecting women's employment, even though by 2010, American women made up 53 percent of the country's labor force.<sup>101</sup>

#### Women in the American Foreign Service

While American diplomacy has been critical to the country's governance structure since before the founding of the nation, the formalization of a system to ensure the hiring of qualified personnel and to support diplomats around the world was a relatively slow process.<sup>102</sup> The Department of State, initially named the Department of Foreign Affairs, was the first federal

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<sup>99</sup> "Women in the Labor Force," *InfoPlease*, 2007, accessed February 19, 2015, <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0104673.html>; United States Census Bureau, "Women in the Workforce," accessed February 19, 2015, [http://www.census.gov/newsroom/pdf/women\\_workforce\\_slides.pdf](http://www.census.gov/newsroom/pdf/women_workforce_slides.pdf).

<sup>100</sup> Roberta W. Francis, "The History Behind the Equal Rights Amendment," National Council of Women's Organizations, accessed February 18, 2015, <http://www.equalrightsamendment.org/history.htm>.

<sup>101</sup> "Women in the Labor Force."

<sup>102</sup> US Department of State, "French Alliance, French Assistance, and European Diplomacy during the American Revolution, 1778–1782," Office of the Historian, accessed September 28, 2015, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1776-1783/french-alliance>.

agency created under the Constitution in 1789, with the broad goal of assisting the President in conducting the affairs of the federal government.<sup>103</sup>

With the rise of first wave feminism in the early 1900s, women's groups began advocating for greater access to government careers. In response, Department of State officials began in 1922 to allow select women, on a case-by-case basis, to stand for the Foreign Service entrance exam with the expectation that women would not be capable of succeeding in the rigorous examination.<sup>104</sup> In December of that year, Ms. Lucille Atcherson, a former suffragette, passed with the third-highest score in her class and was appointed to the Diplomatic Service.<sup>105</sup> The question of where to employ Ms. Atcherson, however, stumped the Foreign Service Personnel Board, so instead of receiving an overseas appointment like her classmates, the Board placed her in the Department's Washington, DC headquarters until a suitable assignment could be found. She remained there for nearly three years.<sup>106</sup>

Ironically, over the same years that it was holding Ms. Atcherson in Washington, the DOS was strongly pushing for the passage of the Foreign Service Act, commonly referred to as the Rogers Act, to fully professionalize and democratize the Foreign Service.<sup>107</sup> Passed in May

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<sup>103</sup> US Department of State, "A Short History of the Department of State," Office of the Historian, accessed September 28, 2015, <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/short-history>.

<sup>104</sup> Homer L. Calkin, *Women in the Department of State: Their Role in Foreign Affairs* (Washington, D.C., Department of State, Department and Foreign Service Series, 1978), 57-59.

<sup>105</sup> Domani Spero, "Women in the Foreign Service — Go Own the Night like the Fourth of July!" *Diplopundit* (Blog), March 8, 2014, accessed February 16, 2015, <http://diplopundit.net/tag/lucile-atcherson/>.

<sup>106</sup> Molly M. Wood, "Lucile Atcherson Curtis: The First Female US Diplomat," *The Foreign Service Journal* 90, no. 7-8 (July-August 2013): 44-72.

<sup>107</sup> Jim Lamont and Larry Cohen, "In the Beginning: The Rogers Act of 1924," *Foreign Service Journal* (May 2014), accessed September 18, 2014, <http://www.afsa.org/PublicationsResources/ForeignServiceJournal/FeaturedContent/May2014IntheBeginning.aspx>.

1924, the Rogers Act merged the Diplomatic and Consular Services, creating the United States Foreign Service. Among other administrative structures, the Act established a Foreign Service Personnel Board and a merit-based personnel system that standardized the review process for both the entrance exam and the promotion process, greatly reducing the nepotism and favoritism previously rampant within the system.<sup>108</sup> In November of that same year, while discussing Ms. Atcherson's case, Mr. Wilbur Carr, Assistant Secretary of State expressed the opinion of many in the higher echelons of government at the time when he noted that women were "not fitted to discharge the exacting and peculiar duties of a Foreign Service Officer."<sup>109</sup> To address this concern, the Personnel Board sought a Presidential Executive Order banning women from the service on the basis that their sex made them "not fitted for service." In the event that the President failed to issue the Executive Order, the Board planned to fail every woman who attempted to take the examination since they were "deficient in personality, objectionable from the point of view of manners, judgment and in other respects...[and] no person with these weaknesses could successfully perform the duties of a Diplomatic or Consular Officer."<sup>110</sup> Secretary of State Charles Hughes unequivocally extinguished those plans, however, noting that any woman who successfully passed the examination must be allowed entrance into the Foreign Service.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> US Department of State, "The Rogers Act," Office of the Historian, accessed October 5, 2014, <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/short-history/rogers>.

<sup>109</sup> Molly M. Wood, "'Women Are Not Adapted to This Sort of Work,' or Are They?: First American Women Diplomats, 1924-1940," OAH Presidential Address, Spring 2012, accessed March 3, 2015, <http://www.ohioacademyofhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Presidential-Address-FINAL-2012.pdf>.

<sup>110</sup> Calkin, 70.

<sup>111</sup> Calkin, 69-71.

It was widely recognized at all levels of the Department, however, that women could not serve at all locations within the FS. As noted by the Register of the Department of State in 1927, “the climatic and social conditions at many posts render it impossible for women to serve at them with satisfaction to themselves and advantage to the Government.”<sup>112</sup> The Department finally found a suitable position for Ms. Atcherson in Bern, Switzerland—much to the dismay of that country’s American Minister—in 1925. After repeatedly being passed over for promotion and accepting that it would be impossible to continue working for the Department of State once she married, Ms. Atcherson resigned from the Foreign Service in 1927.<sup>113</sup>

A second woman, Ms. Pattie Field, passed the entrance exam and the DOS admitted her into the Foreign Service in 1925. The Department slowly admitted additional women over the subsequent decades. Many of these women found that their careers were still limited, however, as only a limited number of diplomatic and consular posts were available to women and resignation was required upon marriage. Even the first American woman appointed to an Ambassadorial-level position, Ms. Ruth Bryan Owen, Minister Plenipotentiary to Denmark from 1933 to 1936, was forced to resign when she wed. Ms. Owen reported that her supervisors in Washington “blatantly” communicated the requirement to resign.<sup>114</sup>

In 1946, Congress passed a new Foreign Service Act, further classifying and professionalizing the FS in an effort “to improve, strengthen, and expand” the existing system.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> US Department of State, “Register of the Department of State, January 1, 1927,” United States Government Printing Office, accessed March 10, 2015, [http://archive.org/stream/registercontaini1927unit/registercontaini1927unit\\_djvu.txt](http://archive.org/stream/registercontaini1927unit/registercontaini1927unit_djvu.txt).

<sup>113</sup> Molly M. Wood, 5-7.

<sup>114</sup> Jewell Fenzi and Carl Nelson, *Married to the Foreign Service: An Oral History of the American Diplomatic Spouse* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994), 65.

<sup>115</sup> Harry Kopp, “Foreign Service, Civil Service: How We Got to Where We Are,” *Foreign Service Journal* (May 2014), accessed September 18, 2014, <http://www.afsa.org/PublicationsResources/ForeignServiceJournal/FeaturedContent/May2014For>



The Act insisted that the service should reflect the make-up of the American people and eliminate “conditions favorable to inbred prejudice and caste spirit.”<sup>116</sup> Under the new provisions, commissioned Officers were required to certify their availability for worldwide service and the "up-or-out" system, under which failure to gain promotion to higher rank within a specified time in class would lead to mandatory retirement, was instituted.<sup>117</sup>

The President’s Commission on the Status of Women, initiated in 1963, noted its displeasure at the number of women represented in the FS. The Commission reviewed the DOS’s promotion policies and procedures and found them to be fair, but noted the lack of training opportunities made available to women to advance their careers. Critically, the Commission found the refusal to provide allowances to married women as required under the *Standardized Regulations for Government Civilians in Foreign Areas* was discriminatory. While forced resignations of women upon marriage had somewhat faded within the Foreign Service, the DOS and other foreign affairs agencies prohibited married women from receiving overseas living quarters and other allowances offered to men and unmarried women on the basis that the husband, not a wife, should serve as the primary provider for the family. The Department officially overturned this policy in 1964 following the release of the Commission’s report, but significant hurdles remained in place, making receipt of the allowances exceedingly difficult for married female employees.<sup>118</sup> While in 1972 a court finally officially struck down the rule that

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eignServiceCivilService.aspx.

<sup>116</sup> Shahla F. Maghzi, "Foreign Service Act of 1946," Major Acts of Congress, 2004, accessed March 10, 2015, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3407400139.html>.

<sup>117</sup> “W(h)ither the Foreign Service? Part I,” Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Moments in U.S. Diplomatic History, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://adst.org/2014/02/whither-the-foreign-service/>.

<sup>118</sup> Calkin, 125.

women had to resign their Foreign Service position upon marriage, these policies essentially meant that female FSOs still “had to be single.”<sup>119</sup>

It was during the confusion and upheaval within the Foreign Service system of the mid-20th century that President Kennedy created USAID with Congress passing of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. The Act intended to bring together several existing organizations and programs into a single US Foreign Assistance Program.<sup>120</sup> As a newly established and independent Agency, USAID was able to distance itself from some of the more overt discrimination against women found in other Government agencies. The USAID Officers who served in the countries the Agency was trying to help, however, were officially designated Foreign Service Officers and, as a much smaller and nascent organization, the new Agency was not able to exert significant influence on the overall Foreign Service system. The same struggling personnel system facing their colleagues in the Department of State and other foreign affairs agencies, therefore, almost immediately affected USAID FSOs.

Under the auspices of the “Program for the Seventies” through which Secretary of State William Rogers attempted to revitalize and modernize the Foreign Service, a group of female FS employees and male Officers’ wives formed the “Ad Hoc Committee to Improve the Status of Women in Foreign Affairs Agencies” in July 1970.<sup>121</sup> By this year, only 8.5 percent of the country’s Foreign Service Officers were women. The Committee’s report and subsequent meetings with Department administrators admonished the FS for leaving women diplomats “10 to

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<sup>119</sup> Gladys Rogers, interviewed by Jean Joyce, March 8, 1974, “Oral History Interviews, 1974-1977: A Finding Aid,” Women's Action Organization, accessed March 15, 2015, <http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/~sch00983>.

<sup>120</sup> US Congress, *US Foreign Assistance Act of 1961*, (Public Law 87-195), September 4, 1961.

<sup>121</sup> Barbara J. Love, *Feminists Who Changed America, 1963-1975* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 179-180.

15 years behind” those working in the private sector. It further appealed to the Secretary of State to “sharply and immediately increase the number of women in [the FS] ranks, not only to comply with Federal equal employment requirements, but also to make full use of the contribution women can make to the service.”<sup>122</sup> The DOS was receptive to these suggestions and worked with the Committee, later named the Women’s Action Organization (WAO), throughout the decade to improve women’s representation in the FS.

In recognition of the growing discontent among FS wives who wanted to pursue career paths of their own, in 1976, Embassy Kabul noted in an unclassified cable to the DOS that “dependent spouses’ morale and overall productivity and happiness of Foreign Service couples can be adversely affected when the spouse ‘has nothing useful to do.’ ” The Embassy started employing spouses on an hourly basis in part-time jobs in an effort to improve both Officers’ and spouses’ satisfaction.<sup>123</sup> Only a handful of Embassies around the world adopted the ad hoc program, however. A March 1977 report by the Association of American Foreign Service Women (AAFSW) entitled “The Concerns of Foreign Service Spouses and Families” further exemplified the growing discontent among Foreign Service wives who wanted careers of their own. The report led to a more concerted effort by the DOS to negotiate bilateral agreements that would allow spouses to work on the local economy. Unfortunately, that never became a viable option in most posts due to lack of relevant job opportunities or competitive pay scales.<sup>124</sup>

Changes in American society and increasing complex bilateral relationships in many parts of the globe led to yet another reorganization of the Foreign Service and issuance of an updated Foreign Service Act in 1980. The new Act reiterated the requirement that the Foreign

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<sup>122</sup> Calkin, 131-134.

<sup>123</sup> Fenzi and Nelson, 186.

<sup>124</sup> William Bacchus, *Staffing for Foreign Affairs: Personnel Systems for the 1980s and 1990s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 154-156.

Service be “representative of the American People,” requiring foreign affairs agencies to recruit, hire, and promote women and minorities. The Act also authorized the Board of the Foreign Service, charged with “advising the Secretary of State on matters relating to the Service, including furtherance of the objectives of maximum compatibility among agencies authorized by law, to utilize the Foreign Service personnel system and compatibility between the Foreign Service personnel system and the other personnel systems of the Government.”<sup>125</sup> It is under this Act that today’s Foreign Service continues to operate—the federal government has enacted no new legislation pertaining to the administration of the diplomatic or consular corps in nearly four decades.

From 1980 to 1990, the percentage of the FS made up of women doubled to 25 percent, but women held only 13 percent of Senior Foreign Service (SFS) positions. In 1989, a US General Accounting Office report noted that the DOS continued to assign women disproportionately to administrative and consular work and granted tenure to women at lower rates than to their male colleagues.<sup>126</sup> That same year a court found that the Department’s FS entrance exam systematically discriminated against women through biases built into the written portion of the exam.<sup>127</sup> In 1997, President Clinton named Madeline Albright the first female Secretary of State, followed by two other women named in subsequent Administrations. Over the past decade, increasing numbers of women have served in other high-level positions within the

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<sup>125</sup> US Congress, *Foreign Service Act of 1980*, P.L. 96-465, accessed October 22, 2014, <http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/fsa.pdf>.

<sup>126</sup> US General Accounting Office, *Underrepresentation of Women and Minorities in the Foreign Service*, September 22, 1989, accessed March 16, 2015, <http://www.gao.gov/assets/110/102770.pdf>.

<sup>127</sup> “The Palmer Case and the Changing Role of Women in the Foreign Service,” Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://adst.org/the-stump/the-palmer-case-and-the-changing-role-of-women-in-the-foreign-service/>.

DOS and other foreign affairs agencies. However, one should not elevate the success of a handful of high-profile women in one's mind to convince themselves that the gender barriers have been broken or that the work environment no longer privileges men over women.<sup>128</sup> Women currently account for only 29 percent of America's Ambassadors and these are disproportionately assigned to small posts in Africa and Asia. In 2013, though women made up 40 percent of the FS generalist Officers within the Department of State, they remained even more underrepresented within the higher ranks, representing only 30 percent of the Senior Foreign Service.<sup>129</sup> Comparatively, women made up 47 percent of the overall US workforce in 2010.<sup>130</sup> If the Foreign Service is ever to achieve its mandated goal of reflecting the face of America throughout the world, it still has a ways to go.

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<sup>128</sup> Juliette Kayyem, "An Eye-Opening Study of the Boys Club That Still Runs US Foreign Policy," *Boston Globe*, July 20, 2011, accessed September 19, 2015, [http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial\\_opinion/blogs/the\\_angle/2011/07/an\\_eye-opening.html](http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/blogs/the_angle/2011/07/an_eye-opening.html).

<sup>129</sup> Margot Carrington, "How are FS Women at State Faring?" *The Foreign Service Journal* 90, no. 5 (May 2013): 39-45.

<sup>130</sup> US Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, "Women in the Labor Force in 2010," accessed March 17, 2015, <http://www.dol.gov/wb/factsheets/Qf-laborforce-10.htm>.

## Women in USAID's Foreign Service Today

Recent research has proven that women have different workplace priorities than their male colleagues. Unfortunately, the Foreign Service system, created decades ago predominately by and for men, largely fails to meet many of those needs. In USAID's 2014 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, only 43 percent of Foreign Service respondents agreed that their workload is reasonable. While 72 percent of those respondents felt that their "supervisor supports [their] need to balance work and other life issues," only 48 percent answered in the positive when asked if senior leaders demonstrate similar support. Just over half of responding FSOs (55 percent) believed that their "performance appraisal is a fair reflection of [their] performance," but only 28 percent consider "promotions in [their] work unit to be based on merit." Disappointingly, only 61 percent agreed that they would "recommend [the] organization as a good place to work."<sup>131</sup>

As women continue to outpace men in receiving advanced degrees and enter the workforce in increasingly larger numbers, any organization that wants to remain competitive in the job market must appeal to women as well as men. Studies have shown that the ability to find work-life balance is exceedingly important to women's perception of their own satisfaction in a job.<sup>132</sup> Women are seeking to "have it all," to pursue high-powered careers and financial independence while simultaneously enjoying a fulfilling family life. The President's Council of Economic Advisors recognized these challenges in its March 2010 report *Work-Life Balance and*

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<sup>131</sup> US Office of Personnel Management, *USAID 2014 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results*, accessed March 10, 2015, <http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/2014%20FEVS%20AES%20Report%20for%20USAID.pdf>.

<sup>132</sup> Kim Parker and Wendy Wang, "Modern Parenthood: Roles of Moms and Dads Converge as They Balance Work and Family," Pew Research Center, March 14, 2013, accessed April 7, 2015, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/03/14/modern-parenthood-roles-of-moms-and-dads-converge-as-they-balance-work-and-family/>.

*the Economics of Workplace Flexibility*.<sup>133</sup> Women, like men, expect to be able to both advance in their careers and raise children; the ramifications of these choices, however, and the requirement to balance both work and family life are still seen as “women’s issues.”<sup>134</sup> The burden of balancing work life with family proves to be even more of an enigma when one adds the Foreign Service system to the mix.<sup>135</sup>

### Work-Life Balance

When entering the Foreign Service as a single woman, few Officers consider the hurdles that face them if they choose to pursue a romantic life. Cultural differences and social mores often preclude American women from even meeting, much less connecting with single men or women of a similar age who share their interests abroad.<sup>136</sup> American women abroad are often cautious of getting into a “green card relationship,” a situation that has become almost cliché within their ranks thanks to its frequency.<sup>137</sup> In many of the developing countries in which

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<sup>133</sup> Executive Office of the President, Council of Economic Advisers, *Work-Life Balance and the Economics of Workplace Flexibility*, March 2010, accessed April 7, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/files/documents/100331-cea-economics-workplace-flexibility.pdf>.

<sup>134</sup> Jessica Grose, “Male Executives Don’t Feel Guilt, See Work-Life Balance as Women’s Problem,” *Slate*, March 5, 2014, accessed April 5, 2015, [http://www.slate.com/blogs/xx\\_factor/2014/03/05/harvard\\_business\\_review\\_study\\_on\\_work\\_life\\_balance\\_male\\_executives\\_see\\_family.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/xx_factor/2014/03/05/harvard_business_review_study_on_work_life_balance_male_executives_see_family.html).

<sup>135</sup> Bryce Covert, “Work-Family Balance Is Important To Both Genders, But It Comes Harder To Women,” *Think Progress*, November 1, 2013, accessed January 3, 2015, <http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2013/11/01/2875801/work-family-survey/>.

<sup>136</sup> Tennis; Katie, “An Open Letter to the Random Omani Man Who Tried to Tempt Me into Illicit Relations by Showing Me Pictures of His Goats,” *Adventures in Good Countries* (Blog), October 14, 2014, accessed April 7, 2015, <http://kakiser.blogspot.com/2014/10/an-open-letter-to-random-omani-man-who.html>; Heather Steil, “My Whole Life is an Unaccompanied Tour,” *Adventures Around the World* (Blog), March 15, 2013, accessed April 7, 2015, <http://heathersworldadventures.blogspot.com/2013/03/my-whole-life-is-unaccompanied-tour.html>.

<sup>137</sup> David Seminara, “Hello, I Love You, Won’t You Tell Me Your Name: Inside the Green Card Marriage Phenomenon,” Center for Immigration Studies, November 2008, accessed April 7, 2015, <http://cis.org/marriagefraud>.

USAID operates, women face a plethora of security issues, increasing the number of obstacles that they must overcome in order to date. If a woman is somehow able to navigate the security restrictions and safely meet an eligible man or woman in her age group who shares her interests, she must then be willing to sacrifice some of her professional standing in order to have a relationship. Embassy communities are generally very small and interconnected, so colleagues generally know about very quickly and judge any social activity undertaken by a member of that community.<sup>138</sup> Women who are known to be dating often lose some credibility in the eyes of their colleagues, a tax that male employees generally do not face when their personal lives are examined.<sup>139</sup> There is all too often no privacy and no ability to separate one's personal life from their professional existence.<sup>140</sup> In fact, prior to marrying or cohabitating with a foreign national while abroad, an FSO must request permission from both the Chief of Mission and Regional Security Officer.<sup>141</sup> Assuming that one is able and willing to navigate the path described above, every FSO knows that relationships abroad have expiration dates corresponding to the date that

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<sup>138</sup> "Can a Single Female Find Love in the Foreign Service?" Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://www.aafsw.org/articles-advice/family-life-in-the-foreign-service/can-single-female-find-love-in-the-foreign-service/>.

<sup>139</sup> Dave Seminara, "A Traveler in the Foreign Service: (Not So) Sexy Time," *Gadling* (Blog), January 30, 2012, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://gadling.com/2012/01/30/a-traveler-in-the-foreign-service-not-so-sexy-time/>.

<sup>140</sup> Megan Meline, "Foreign Service Life Disruptive for Families," National Public Radio Morning Edition, July 26, 2006, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5582909>.

<sup>141</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Affairs Manual Volume 12, Diplomatic Security, 12 FAM 270, Security Reporting Requirements*, March 9, 2015, 5-6, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/88344.pdf>; James Bruno, "Love, Romance and Sex in the U.S. Foreign Service - Part II: Bombs & Bureaucrats," *Diplo Denizen* (Blog), January 19, 2011, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://jameslbruno.blogspot.com/2011/01/on-love-romance-and-sex-in-us-foreign.html>.



their tour ends.<sup>142</sup> At that time, the FSO can either leave USAID or marry their new partner and move with them to whatever post awaits.<sup>143</sup> The options are limited and drastic.<sup>144</sup>

If a woman does find a partner to marry, or if she is already married upon entering the Foreign Service, that partner must be willing to uproot his or her life at the whim of the US government, joining the Officer as they maneuver through even more bureaucracies that impact one's personal and professional success abroad.<sup>145</sup> The FS system was established, and continues to operate, on the assumption that "trailing spouses" will forfeit any career prospects to follow their spouse from country to country, in accordance with the needs of the service and his or her career. Assuming that a woman did not happen to find a spouse with that elusive entirely mobile on-line career, the first consideration for many is that spouse's career; unfortunately, that is frequently the first hurdle as well.<sup>146</sup>

While many Embassies, in recognition of the changing demographics of their staff, have made efforts to make more jobs available to FSO spouses, referred to as Eligible Family Member

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<sup>142</sup> Elizabeth Malkin, "Ready to Travel the World Together," *The New York Times*, February 13, 2015, accessed February 28, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/15/fashion/weddings/ready-to-travel-the-world-together.html>.

<sup>143</sup> In order to receive the benefits generally necessary to accompany an FSO—including air travel and assistance in obtaining visas, ability to live in US Government-provided housing, use of Embassy health and security apparatuses, and access to Embassy jobs—it is usually necessary to be married. See US Department of State, "A Guide to the Foreign Service," Family Liaison Office, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/101170.pdf>.

<sup>144</sup> James Bruno, "Love, Romance & Sex in the U.S. Foreign Service - Part I: Of Lust & Loneliness," *Diplo Denizen* (Blog), January 5, 2011, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://jameslbruno.blogspot.com/2011/01/love-romance-sex-in-us-foreign-service.html>.

<sup>145</sup> Dave Seminara, "A Traveler in the Foreign Service: Meet and Intrepid Diplomat," *Gadling* (Blog), April 4, 2012, accessed February 16, 2015, <http://gadling.com/2012/04/04/a-traveler-in-the-foreign-service-meet-an-intrepid-diplomat/>.

<sup>146</sup> Patricia Linderman, "Foreign Service Family Challenges," Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide, accessed March 24, 2015, <http://www.aafsw.org/articles-advice/family-life-in-the-foreign-service/foreign-service-family-challenges/>.

or EFM employment, those jobs tend to be lower- to mid-level administrative positions and they remain difficult to obtain.<sup>147</sup> Not all Embassies offer EFM employment or have opportunities in sufficient numbers to meet the demand.<sup>148</sup> If one is able to find employment, it is unlikely that the job will be in the field in which that spouse specializes or is particularly interested; the government does not take into consideration the spouse's career track in the creation of EFM jobs.<sup>149</sup> Many of the positions do not offer competitive pay or benefits, so the spouse must decide if they are willing to take what might represent a significant decrease in salary. Finally, when departing one post in which a spouse has held an EFM job, there is no guarantee that a similar job will be available at the next Embassy to which the Agency posts that family.<sup>150</sup> In fact, there is no formal way to determine what EFM positions might be available at a potential post prior to choosing one's onward assignment.<sup>151</sup> Further, seniority or benefits accumulated in a previous

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<sup>147</sup> "The EFM Work Situation," *Tabbies in Tow* (Blog), January 25, 2012, accessed March 24, 2015, <http://tabbiesintow.blogspot.com/2012/01/efm-work-situation.html>.

<sup>148</sup> Mara Rae, "Some Thoughts on EFM Employment," *Most Eligible Family* (Blog), March 6, 2015, accessed April 4, 2015, <http://mosteligiblenamefamily.blogspot.com/2015/03/some-thoughts-on-efm-employment.html>.

<sup>149</sup> Michael A. Dean, "Employment Options for Foreign Service Family Members," Family Liaison Office, US Department of State, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/2098.pdf>; Kolbi, "The Day The State Department Broke My Heart (or: Massive EFM Issues)," *A Daring Adventure* (Blog), May 30, 2011, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://adaringadventure.typepad.com/blog/2011/05/the-day-the-state-department-broke-my-heart.html>; Kelly, "Who Are You Calling 'Eligible'?", *Well That Was Different* (Blog), February 10, 2015, accessed April 4, 2015, <http://wellthatwasdifferent.com/2015/02/10/who-are-you-calling-eligible/>.

<sup>150</sup> Nicholas Kralev, "Ups and Downs of Diplomatic Life," (Blog), March 3, 2010, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://nicholaskralev.com/2010/03/03/ups-and-downs-of-diplomatic-life/>; Brett McKay and Kate McKay, "So You Want My Job: Foreign Service Officer/Diplomat," *The Art of Manliness*, April 25, 2013, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://www.artofmanliness.com/2013/04/25/so-you-want-my-job-foreign-service-officerdiplomat/>.

<sup>151</sup> Patrick, "Professional Foreign Service Spouse," US Department of State, Careers, *Family Life* (Blog), March 5, 2012, accessed March 24, 2015, <https://careers.state.gov/engage/forums/family-life/professional-foreign-service-spouse>.

post will not transfer to the new position, so the spouse is essentially starting anew in their career every one to four years. While bilateral work agreements allowing spouses to work on the local economy do exist with many countries in which USAID operates, the effectiveness of those agreements or the availability of relevant employment in whatever field that spouse happens to work is often problematic. Even if the work is available and the host government recognizes the bilateral agreement, a spouse must decide if the pay cut required to work in a developing country will be more detrimental or helpful to their career trajectory.<sup>152</sup>

Another important factor that can constrain one's ability to work on the local economy is language skills. While technically available in USAID's regulations, budget constraints are the most commonly cited reason for refusal to allow spouses of USAID employees to obtain language training prior to departing for posts that other foreign affairs agencies routinely and unquestioningly provided to employee's spouses.<sup>153</sup> Even the ad hoc language training offered at some posts is only accessible to spouses if the Mission Director determines that it should be, leaving huge gaps in the preparedness of many spouses to not only work in, but to even navigate, a foreign capital. In the absence of adequate language training, the spouse of a USAID FSO is often relegated to their house and to the immediate Embassy community when that employee is working or otherwise occupied. Social events available to spouses in many Embassy communities

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<sup>152</sup> Zachary Bromer, "Dream Job: Diplomat: Discover How to Be the American Express for Visas," Salary.com, accessed March 23, 2015, <http://www.salary.com/dream-job-diplomat/>; Patricia Linderman, "Prospective FSO Seeks Spouse," Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide, 2015, accessed March 24, 2015, <http://www.aafsw.org/articles-advice/family-life-in-the-foreign-service/prospective-fso-seeks-spouse/>; Meline, "Foreign Service Life Disruptive for Families."

<sup>153</sup> Brendan M. Wheeler, "Speaking Out: Purchasing Parity: USAID's EFM Language Training Policy," *Foreign Service Journal*, 89, no. 4 (April 2012): 14-15, accessed April 3, 2015, <http://www.afsa.org/FSJ/0412/index.html#/14/zoomed>.

still tend to focus on “women’s interests” and children; rarely do husbands actively participate in the luncheons and charity events planned for Embassy spouses.<sup>154</sup>

These career constraints certainly affect both husbands and wives of Foreign Service Officers. However, the continued societal pressure persistent in America, and even more prevalent in many of the countries in which USAID operates, for a husband to be the primary provider within a family structure, undoubtedly makes the decision of a man to forego his career to become a “trailing spouse” all the more difficult.<sup>155</sup> Even when a man decides to assume this role, the added pressure on the employee to ensure her spouse is enjoying professional and personal fulfillment can be overwhelming.<sup>156</sup>

Raising children as a female Foreign Service Officer presents its own set of challenges. Women are still perceived within American society—and sometimes to an even greater extent in other cultures—to be the most appropriate childcare providers.<sup>157</sup> Many women want to serve that role for their family. However, many women feel that the Foreign Service does not permit them to do so. The FS system does not currently allow for the flexible work options offered by many private sector employers or by USAID for its Washington-based staff.<sup>158</sup> USAID offices abroad

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<sup>154</sup> Jennifer Seminara, “A Traveler in the Foreign Service: A ‘Trailing Spouse’ Speaks Out,” *Gadling* (Blog), May 24, 2012, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://gadling.com/2012/05/24/a-traveler-in-the-foreign-service-a-trailing-spouse-speaks-ou/>.

<sup>155</sup> David L., “EFM: Emasculating For Men?” *EFM: The Life of an FSO Spouse* (Blog), March 16, 2010, accessed March 24, 2015, <http://fsospouse.blogspot.com/2010/03/efm-emasculating-for-men.html>.

<sup>156</sup> Anne M. Braseby, “Adaptation of Trailing Spouses: Does Gender Matter?” (PhD diss., Florida International University, March 25, 2015), 185-186, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1211&context=etd>.

<sup>157</sup> Wendy Wang, Kim Parker, and Paul Taylor, “Breadwinner Moms,” Pew Research Center, May 29, 2013, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/05/29/breadwinner-moms/>.

<sup>158</sup> US Agency for International Development, “An Assessment of USAID’s Programs and Policies to Improve the Lives of Women and Girls,” August 2009, accessed April 8, 2015,

do not fill Foreign Service positions on a part-time basis and alternate work schedules (AWS) and the Ambassador, who approves all unconventional work agreements for Embassy employees, almost universally denies telework arrangements.<sup>159</sup> FSOs who are required to spend 40- to 60-hours each week at the office cannot also serve as primary care providers for young children. Further, steering through the assignment process becomes more complicated, as one must take into account children's educational needs and any special needs they must accommodate.<sup>160</sup>

With the exception of abiding by the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), USAID does not offer parental leave.<sup>161</sup> This policy often puts FSOs serving overseas a greater disadvantage than their US-based colleagues, due to the additional hurdles FSOs must jump through in order to ensure safe pregnancies. Generally, there are not hospital facilities acceptable by American standards in which a Foreign Service Officer could give birth in the countries in which the Agency operates. Given safety issues, that means that a FSO who is pregnant while abroad must depart post at least six weeks prior to her estimated due date.<sup>162</sup> She will then take leave until the baby is born and US government regulations will not permit her to return to post until at least six weeks after the birth when the baby can get a medical clearance and diplomatic passport for travel. While some women have found remedies for this situation—working in the USAID

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[https://communities.usaidallnet.gov/st/sites/st/file/usaidd\\_wh\\_cwg\\_100312.pdf](https://communities.usaidallnet.gov/st/sites/st/file/usaidd_wh_cwg_100312.pdf).

<sup>159</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Affairs Manual Volume 3, Personnel*, 3 FAM 2362.3 *Telework, Special Circumstances, Abroad*, June 7, 2011, accessed March 24, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/84857.pdf>.

<sup>160</sup> Dave Seminara, "A Traveler in the Foreign Service: What Impact Does Moving Have on Children," *Gadling* (Blog), May 23, 2013, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://gadling.com/tag/atravelerintheforeignservice/>.

<sup>161</sup> "A Comprehensive Guide on Issues Related to Pregnancy, 2013," American Foreign Service Association, accessed March 25, 2015, [http://www.afsa.org/pregnancy\\_and\\_related\\_issues\\_guide.aspx](http://www.afsa.org/pregnancy_and_related_issues_guide.aspx).

<sup>162</sup> Pulisha, "Pregnancy Medevac," *Pu's Corner* (Blog), March 17, 2014, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://pulisha.blogspot.com/2014/03/pregnancy-medevac.html>; Jenni, "Med-what?" *Jenni Goes Global* (Blog), February 1, 2014, accessed March 25, 2015, <https://jennigoesglobal.wordpress.com/2014/02/01/med-what/>.

Headquarters in Washington, DC prior to the birth or teleworking—supervisors agree to those arrangements entirely on a case-by-case basis. More often than not, women are required to take twelve or more weeks of sick and annual leave in order to accommodate the birth of their child. While wives of FSO employees will need to take at least as much time as those female employees, their spouses may travel closer to the due date or return prior to the full recovery/clearance period. This means that while male employees may experience personal hardship, they often do not have the same impact on their leave and career when expanding their family.

Some FSOs try to alleviate the pressure described above by taking tours back in the States. Unlike the DOS, USAID does not mandate or expect FSOs to serve a domestic tour after every couple of tours.<sup>163</sup> Consequently, USAID does not have a sufficient number of Headquarters-based positions available to FSOs and for the past several years, those positions have been highly competitive even though Officers often perceive those tours to be detrimental to an their careers. Since FSOs with preferential bidding status or extraordinary personal circumstances that require them to be in the States (such as illness in the immediate family) often take those positions, by the time most Officers can even compete for a job in Washington they are usually no longer available. Further, even when an Officer gets a Headquarters-based job, they are generally not eligible for the long-term remote telecommuting arrangements that other

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<sup>163</sup> US Agency for International Development, *ADS 436.3.11.4: Limit on Continuous Duty Overseas*, June 2, 2005, accessed April 10, 2015, <http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1877/436.pdf>. Officially, USAID's policy requires that FSOs return to the States for one tour every fifteen years in accordance with the Foreign Service Act of 1980. However, USAID frequently waives that condition due to lack of available positions or interest from the FSO.

USAID employees can take advantage of, further denying FSOs of flexible work options, in this case even those available to their colleagues.<sup>164</sup>

### Career Pressure

Upon joining the service, FSOs agree to make themselves available for worldwide service, meaning that they can be sent anywhere in the world for multiple years at a time, according to the needs of the service.<sup>165</sup> Increasingly more and more USAID posts are located in countries experiencing or just exiting active conflict, where instability and lack of infrastructure makes it impossible to bring family members, especially children.<sup>166</sup> Given the difficulties associated with these types of tours, USAID has instituted a robust incentives package, including not only generous salary bonuses, but also frequent vacations and, for some posts, preferential consideration for onward assignments. The Agency now requires that each Officer, when “bidding” on a new assignment, include at least one position in a war zone (referred to as Critical Priority Countries or CPCs), another in a post recently extracting itself from active conflict (many of which still have significant restrictions on the ages of family members who can travel to that

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<sup>164</sup> US Agency for International Development, *Guidelines for Establishing a Remote Telework Agreement: An Additional Help for ADS 405*, last updated January 18, 2012, accessed April 5, 2015, <http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1877/405sab.pdf>. While USAID’s policy on remote telecommuting requires only that an employee has worked for the Agency for at least one year, in practice the minimum has been that an employee has held the specific position s/he will be undertaking for multiple years. Since that is impossible within a normal FS tour (3 years in the States), they will never meet that bar. The Agency has made infrequent exceptions to this policy on a case-by-case basis, further exacerbating the concerns of many Officers who see implementation of this policy as inconsistent.

<sup>165</sup> MG Edwards, “I Am No Longer A Foreign Service Officer,” *World Adventurers* (Blog), January 4, 2012, accessed February 25, 2015, <https://worldadventurers.wordpress.com/2012/01/04/i-am-no-longer-a-foreign-service-officer/>.

<sup>166</sup> Megan Meline, “Dangerous Postings: Life in the Foreign Service,” *National Public Radio Morning Edition*, July 25, 2006, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5343016>.

post), and a third in a country in Africa.<sup>167</sup> Each position in these countries must be filled before any other can be taken in to consideration, so if someone has a personal reason for needing to stay in a specific region—i.e., spouse’s language skills, children’s’ education—those justifications will often be overlooked in deference to “the needs of the service.”

While USAID technically has yet to do so, the Agency does maintain the ability to force any Officer to accept an assignment in a danger zone.<sup>168</sup> However, many Officers report that either the benefits of serving in a CPC (especially the ability to choose a highly sought after onward assignment) or the pressure to do so from their colleagues/supervisors/Headquarters bureaus has led them to take these assignments against their wishes. This is causing parents to leave young children for one- to two-year periods, requiring spouses to separate for long periods, putting pressure on the spouse left behind to serve as the sole caregiver, and increasing the stress on already difficult family situations.<sup>169</sup> Some within the USAID have insisted that the Agency should require unmarried employees or those who do not have children to take these assignments—a solution that would severely overburden one small group of employees. Others have suggested that new hires should serve in these countries as a stipulation for getting a job—an option that would lead to staffing some of the Agency’s most critical programs with employees who are still learning the basics of development program implementation. All of these suggestions have obvious inherent flaws—this overwhelming responsibility cannot be shouldered by any single small group of Officers with the service.

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<sup>167</sup> US Agency for International Development, “2015 Employee Bid Form Instructions,” October 10, 2014.

<sup>168</sup> US Agency for International Development, “Foreign Service Officer FAQ.”

<sup>169</sup> Dave Seminara, “A Traveler in the Foreign Service: What Impact Does Moving Have on Children.”



Tours in CPCs and danger zones, especially multiple tours in similar high-stress environments, have significantly increased the rate of FSOs who report feeling stressed and overwhelmed.<sup>170</sup> However, it is not only tours typically associated with these high-stress environments that are causing Officers to report that the Agency is placing excessive demands upon them. A highly restricted operating expenses budget that is significantly restraining the Agency's ability to increase its staff, at the same time as program budgets increase and reporting requirements expand, have significantly increased day-to-day demands on staff. Given the written nature of this work, most of those new requirements are falling on the American FSOs at post. While this negatively affects both men and women in their working lives, it disproportionately influences women by further reducing the amount of time available to foster the work-life balance that women consistently report as being critical to their professional satisfaction.<sup>171</sup> Women also suffer more from the societal pressure that they be nurturing and that they put their "family first" while society accepts that a man may need to spend extra time at work in order to be the provider for his family.<sup>172</sup>

Another career-focused pressure placed on women is the up-or-out system dictated by the Foreign Service Act. This system requires that all Officers follow a Congressionally mandated linear career path, advancing through the system at or near a pre-defined rate.<sup>173</sup> This system

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<sup>170</sup> Cornwell.

<sup>171</sup> Melissa Abercromby, "A Report on the Importance of Work-Life Balance," *Business Improvement Architects*, 2007, accessed April 3, 2015, <https://www.bia.ca/articles/AReportontheImportanceofWork-LifeBalance.htm>; Boris Groysberg and Robin Abrahams, "Manage Your Work, Manage Your Life," *Harvard Business Review* (March 2014), accessed March 26, 2015, <https://hbr.org/2014/03/manage-your-work-manage-your-life>.

<sup>172</sup> Miriam Schulman, "Time to Go Home: Long Hours Put the Squeeze on Workers and Their Families," *Issues in Ethics* 8, no. 1 (Winter 1997), accessed April 3, 2015, <http://www.scu.edu/ethics/publications/ie/v8n1/timetogohome.html>.

<sup>173</sup> US Agency for International Development, *ADS 440, Time in Class (TIC) Limitations*

leaves no room for the non-linear career path shown to be essential in the retention and advancement of women. Many women experience periods in their lives when they need to separate from their career for a while, usually for family reasons such as providing full-time childcare or caring for elderly family members—tasks that still fall to women more often than men in American society.<sup>174</sup> However, in the competitive foreign service system, where Officers are provided a finite period of time between promotions and are separated from the service if they do not achieve those promotions in the legally-defined number of years, these sorts of career pauses all too often threaten to cause an Officer to miss her window for promotion. Once that window has passed, her career with USAID is in jeopardy.

A 1980 Department of State FSO penned an article describing her experiences as an evaluator on the FS AEF review board. She noted that both supervisors (subtly) and reviewers (blatantly) consistently characterized women as either being pliable and overly hard working (therefore making up for some other serious intellectual or skills flaw) or overly tenacious and aggressive (therefore their brilliance and excellent work products were overshadowed by their inability to work well with others).<sup>175</sup> While the situation has undoubtedly improved over the past two-and-a-half decades, copious research has shown that assumptions and expectations surrounding gender influence the way both men and women evaluate candidates' performance,

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*and Limited Career Extensions (LCEs)*, February 10, 2012, accessed March 28, 2015, <http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1877/440.pdf>.

<sup>174</sup> Jenny Bimrose, Mary McMahon, and Mark Watson, *Women's Career Development Throughout the Lifespan: An International Exploration* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 232-235; Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Carolyn Buck Luce, "Off-ramps and On-ramps: Keeping Talented Women on the Road to Success," *Harvard Business Review*, March 1, 2005, accessed March 25, 2015, <https://hbr.org/2005/03/off-ramps-and-on-ramps-keeping-talented-women-on-the-road-to-success>.

<sup>175</sup> Lois W. Roth, "Nice Girl or Pushy Bitch: To Roads to Nonpromotion," Women's Action Organization, Occasional Paper of February 1980, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://rothendowment.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Lois-Roth-1980-WAO-article.pdf>.

even today and even when they are committed to egalitarian principles.<sup>176</sup> Women in USAID may worry that the personal statements included in their evaluations may seem overly boastful—a concern that seems valid in light of recent studies and which their male colleagues likely do not have to worry about.<sup>177</sup>

### Role Models and Mentors

Many women, like men, look to their predecessors to exemplify success in their chosen career. If women entering USAID's Foreign Service do not see other women who they would like to emulate in the Agency's upper echelons, many will become discouraged and determine that there is not an adequate path to reach her career goals within the organization. While women's rate of promotion into the SFS have increased over the past several years, the percent of women in the higher ranks still lags behind that of men—41 percent to 59 percent, respectively.<sup>178</sup> At the same time, the number of male Mission Directors leading USAID offices throughout the world outnumbers women in that role nearly two-to-one.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Cecilia L. Ridgeway and Lynn Smith-Lovin, "The Gender System and Interaction," *Annual Review of Sociology* 25 (1999): 196-202; Rocio Garcia-Retamer and Esther López-Zafra, "Prejudice against Women in Male Congenial Environments: Perceptions of Gender Role Congruity in Leadership," *Sex Roles* 55, no. 2 (Jul 2006): 55-57; Dana Wilkie, "Bringing Bias into the Light," *HR Magazine* 59, no. 12 (Dec 2014): 22-27; Sandberg.

<sup>177</sup> Roth; David Greene, "In Some Jobs, Past Achievements May Work Against Female Workers," National Public Radio, Morning Edition, September 9, 2014, accessed April 13, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/2014/09/09/347017590/in-some-jobs-past-achievements-may-be-held-against-female-workers>; Gillian Orr, "Ban the B-word: Men May be 'Commanding' but Only Women get Called 'Bossy' - and it's Undermining Female Ambition," *The Independent*, March 12, 2014, accessed March 19, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/analysis-and-features/ban-the-bword-men-may-be-commanding-but-only-women-get-called-bossy--and-its-undermining-female-ambition-9188032.html>.

<sup>178</sup> US Agency for International Development, Human Resources, "USAID Direct Hire (Foreign and Civil Service) Employees in Washington and Overseas" (Working Draft), September 30, 2014.

<sup>179</sup> US Agency for International Development, "Who We Are: Mission Directors," updated February 27, 2015, accessed March 19, 2015, <http://www.usaid.gov/who-we->

Much has been made of the need for women to have “mentors” in order to achieve in the workplace.<sup>180</sup> Many organizations, including USAID, have embraced this idea, which requires nearly no organizational investment or managerial involvement. USAID has established formal mentorship programs wherein female junior Officers are “matched” with more experienced, senior-level employees. The hands-off nature of these programs that attracts the organizations to start them in the first place, however, inevitably leads to ineffective and unequal implementation of the curriculum at best and they generally die a slow, unremarkable death. Spontaneous women’s networking groups, many of which are modeled after Sandberg’s *Lean In*, have recently been found to be more effective, but can only function where large groups of women have the opportunity to gather regularly to discuss issues that affect them, something not generally possible in a USAID Mission or even a typically-sized Embassy community.<sup>181</sup>

#### Impact on Male FSOs

As has been implied in the above, it is not only women employed by foreign affairs agencies who are negatively impacted by the FS system. Male FSOs are becoming increasingly aware of the faults within the system, especially as their spouses continue to voice discontent with the system and with their relegation to the status of “trailing spouse.” As one researcher noted,

a vast generational gulf separates the affluent American Foreign Service wife of 1914 and the declining number of spouses willing to accompany their Officer mates abroad in the 1990s. The former lived in a cocoon, in a stratified society, and mingled with like spouses

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are/organization/mission-directors?field\_region\_nid=All.

<sup>180</sup> Peggy Drexler, “Can Women Succeed Without A Mentor?” *Forbes*, March 4, 2014, accessed April 13, 2015, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/peggydrexler/2014/03/04/can-women-succeed-without-a-mentor/>; Jane Hession, *Women in the Modern Workplace: Gender Barriers to Business Start-Ups* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 20.

<sup>181</sup> Lisa Bonos, “A Year After ‘Lean In,’ These are Sheryl Sandberg’s Truest Believers,” *Washington Post*, March 7, 2014, accessed April 13, 2015, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/a-year-after-lean-in-these-are-sheryl-sandbergs-truest-believers/2014/03/07/407b0e8e-9dac-11e3-a050-dc3322a94fa7\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/a-year-after-lean-in-these-are-sheryl-sandbergs-truest-believers/2014/03/07/407b0e8e-9dac-11e3-a050-dc3322a94fa7_story.html).

at home and abroad. She saw the Foreign Service as an extension of her domestic support role. The latter, in many cases, had little interest in a mate's career and found the mobile life that accompanied it a profound deterrence to her or his own aspirations and accomplishments. Nonetheless, each of these spouses was linked solidly to her times and to the continuing representational needs of diplomacy...the spouses did, and still do, manage a domestic staff; function in a foreign language; feed and house a parade of American VIPs; orchestrate entertaining for thousands of host country contacts; and perhaps most demanding, play a public role that meets the expectations of the host country culture.<sup>182</sup>

Moreover, younger Generation X and Millennial men are more likely to prioritize work-life balance and to be interested in following non-traditional, non-linear career paths than were their fathers or grandfathers. Both men and women of these generations are more likely than their predecessors to change careers frequently and to leave a job if it is not allowing them to meet their personal needs.<sup>183</sup>

#### Recommendations for Future Research

To determine to what degree women and men serving in USAID's Foreign Service perceive these gender-related impacts of the system, the Agency should initiate a formal, centralized exit interview process. USAID should gender disaggregate information collected through that process and use that data to determine what reforms would be most beneficial to improve FSO retention. Similarly, USAID should gender disaggregate information collected through the Agency's annual *Employee Viewpoint Survey* and review employee input gained through that process from a gender-sensitive perspective.

Before USAID can justify making many of the necessary improvements to the Foreign Service system implied above, additional research is needed to provide the Agency with specific

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<sup>182</sup> Fenzi and Nelson, 231-232.

<sup>183</sup> Larissa Faw, "How Millennials Are Redefining Their Careers As Hustlers," *Forbes*, July 19, 2012, accessed March 10, 2014, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/larissafaw/2012/07/19/how-millennials-are-redefining-their-careers-as-hustlers/>.

cost-benefit comparisons. In the current budget constrained environment, USAID will need to explore not only the potential boost to morale, but also the direct financial costs to the Agency in implementing any reform. Future research should compare those costs with the cost savings that would be expected due to reduced attrition and increased employee engagement and productivity.

## Conclusion

The progression of the feminist movement over the past century has led to an American society in which women expect to garner the same opportunities afforded to men. Congress institutionalized the Foreign Service system at the beginning of that movement, however, and changes to the system have not kept up with the monumental cultural shift experienced through the waves of the feminist movement. The FS system, established by and for men, has not met the needs of its female employees and, without some updating to the system, it is likely that women will either choose to either leave the service or to forego a diplomatic career altogether.

In the past, the attitude of too many leaders within USAID toward Officers expressing discontent with the FS system has been to accept that if employees choose to leave they can be easily replaced. Managers seem to believe that employees should be grateful to have been allowed entry into the Foreign Service and that each individual should adapt him- or herself to the system. Younger professionals entering the system are unlikely to find this outdated approach acceptable, however. Luckily, trends indicate that USAID understands that it needs to change its personnel systems. The Office of Human Capital and Talent Management, established in 2010 as part of the Agency's "USAID Forward" reform program, has been tasked to "find, develop, and retain the best people to work at USAID."<sup>184</sup> However, the *USAID Forward Annual Progress Reports* have not highlighted the progress made and it is unclear what improvements have been made under the initiative. Moreover, there is concern among employees that the Agency will again neglect the effort when the President names a new USAID Administrator, as has occurred with efforts to transform the Agency in the past.

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<sup>184</sup> US Agency for International Development, "Who We Are: Office of Human Capital and Talent Management," updated March 12, 2015, accessed March 20, 2015, <http://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/organization/independent-offices/office-human-capital-talent-management>.

To modernize its system and make USAID’s Foreign Service an attractive career choice for high-caliber female development professionals, the Agency needs to consider a number of concrete and visible updates to that system. Finding a way to institutionalize a flexible and adaptive career path for all employees, allowing them to serve in the States or to take a break from service without jeopardizing their career, would meet the needs of women who are seeking non-linear career paths. Offering employees AWS, telework, and part-time work options while service abroad may make continued overseas service more attractive to female employees. Developing a program that offers a truly fulfilling career path for spouses of FSOs and that enables families to account for that career path in bidding decisions would make the Foreign Service lifestyle more acceptable to families. Instituting a maternity leave policy that does not penalize female employees who choose to start families while service in the Foreign Service may encourage more women to remain in the FS, as implementation of such a policy has done in other sectors.<sup>185</sup> To eliminate even the perception of gender bias (conscious or unconscious), elimination of all references to gender, including names, in annual evaluation form (AEF) review process would increase women’s trust in the employee evaluation and promotion process. The Agency could encourage informal networking among female staff, providing opportunities for women to discuss issues impacting their careers and supporting any groups or organizations that are formed through that process to assist newer employees to understand the career progression available to them within the Agency. Formal leadership training targeted toward women could also help with this effort.

Continuing to leave decisions regarding how and when to implement reforms to supervisors or Missions to adopt on an ad hoc basis will not serve to improve employee morale or confidence in the Agency—in fact it may achieve just the opposite as women see unfair

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<sup>185</sup> Cain Miller.



application of rules and privileges throughout the system. Further, under the new system wherein the Ambassador is in charge of all USG agencies in an Embassy, individual Missions do not have the authority or—as a small agency—sway to negotiate new policies for their employees. USAID Headquarters must lead a concerted effort to negotiate these practices directly with DOS counterparts in support of in-country efforts. USAID Mission Directors and other leaders must be engaged in these changes to ensure equal implementation. By manifesting initiative in this way, USAID has the opportunity to demonstrate its innovative nature, leading a change that other USG agencies will eventually adopt as their organizations begin to feel the same societal pressures for transformation. Additionally, by implementing these reforms, USAID will protect the investment of taxpayer dollars the Agency makes in each Officer by reducing dissatisfaction among its female FSOs and ensuring that long-term careers in the Foreign Service remain a viable and attractive option for high-quality development professionals.

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